

JANUARY, 1929

NEW

15 CENTS

# MASSSES



*Woodcut by Hernandez from a drawing by Xavier Guerrero*

## DEATH TO THE LANDLORDS!

A REVOLUTIONARY BALLAD OF MEXICO

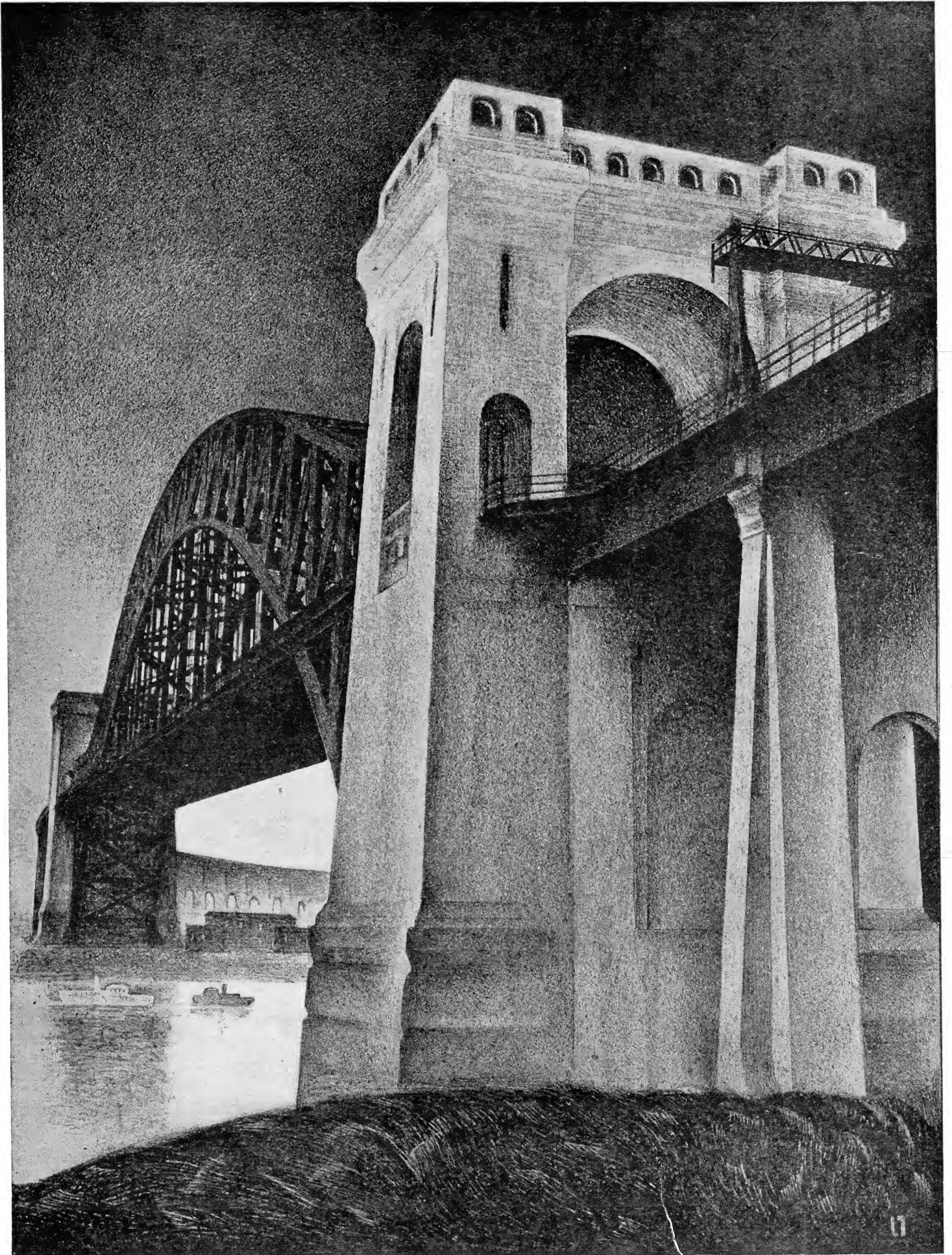
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*New Year Literary Number*

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## LENIN ON ART





**A NEW BRIDGE, by Louis Lozowick**

# NEW MASSES

VOLUME 4

JANUARY, 1929

NUMBER 8

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## GO LEFT, YOUNG WRITERS!

By MICHAEL GOLD

Literature is one of the products of a civilization like steel or textiles. It is not a child of eternity, but of time. It is always the mirror of its age. It is not any more mystic in its origin than a ham sandwich.

It is easy to understand the lacquer of cynicism, smartness and Ritz sophistication with which popular American writing is now coated. This is a product of "our" sudden prosperity, the gesture of our immense group of *nouveau riches*.

The epic melancholy of Dreiser, the romantic democracy of Carl Sandburg, the social experimentation of Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Mark Twain, Edgar Lee Masters and other men of the earlier decades, is as dead as the Indian's Manitou.

We are living in another day. It is dominated by a hard, successful, ignorant jazzy bourgeois of about thirty-five, and his leech-like young wife.

Just as European tours, night clubs, Florida beaches and stream line cars have been invented for this class, just so literature is being produced for them. They have begun to have time, and now read books occasionally to fill in the idle moments between cocktail parties.

They need novels that will take the place of the old fashioned etiquette books to teach them how to spend their money smartly. Ernest Hemingway is one of the caterers to this demand.

\* \* \* \* \*

The liberals have become disheartened and demoralized under the strain of American prosperity. Are there any liberals left in America? I doubt it. The "Nation" was the last organ of the liberals in this country. It has been swinging right in the last few years. When it surrendered itself body and soul to Tammany Hall in the last campaign, I think it performed a logical suicide.

Its editorials now read like the New York World. Its book reviews and dramatic criticisms are no different in viewpoint from those in the New York Times or Tribune. In fact the same group of writers fill the columns of both liberal and conservative press, and no one can detect the difference.

There isn't any difference.

\* \* \* \* \*

There isn't a centrist liberal party in our politics any more, or in our literature. There is an immense overwhelming, right wing which accepts the American religion of "prosperity." The conservatives accept it joyfully, the liberals "soulfully." But both accept it.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is also a left wing, led in politics by the Communists, and in literature by the New Masses. Will someone inform us if

there is something vital between these two extremes of right and left?

This is in some ways a depressing situation. Can there be a battle between such unequal forces? Will it not rather be a massacre or a lion carelessly crushing the rabbit that has crossed his path?

\* \* \* \* \*

No. The great mass of America is not "prosperous" and it is not being represented in the current politics or literature. There are at least 40 million people who are the real America.

They are Negroes, immigrants, poor farmers and city proletarians and they live in the same holes they did ten years ago. Upon their shoulders the whole gaudy show-palace rests. When they stir it will and must fall.

It was the same in Rome, in France, in Russia; it is the same here.

Let us never be dazzled by appearances. The American orgy has been pitched on the crater of the historic social volcano.

This volcano is as certain to erupt eventually as is Mount Etna.

\* \* \* \* \*

By default, the liberals have presented us writers and revolutionists of the left wing with a monopoly on the basic American mass. We have a wonderful virgin field to explore; titanic opportunities for creative work.

Let us be large, heroic and self-confident at our historic task.

\* \* \* \* \*

The best and newest thing a young writer can now do in America, if he has the vigor and the guts, is to go leftward. If he gets tangled up in the other thing he will make some money, maybe, but he will lose everything else. Neither the Saturday Evening Post or the Nation can any longer nourish the free heroic soul. Try it and see.

\* \* \* \* \*

When I say "go leftward," I don't mean the temperamental bohemian left, the stale old Paris posing, the professional poetizing etc. No, the real thing; a knowledge of working class life in America gained from first hand contacts, and a hard precise philosophy of 1929 based on economics, not verbalisms.

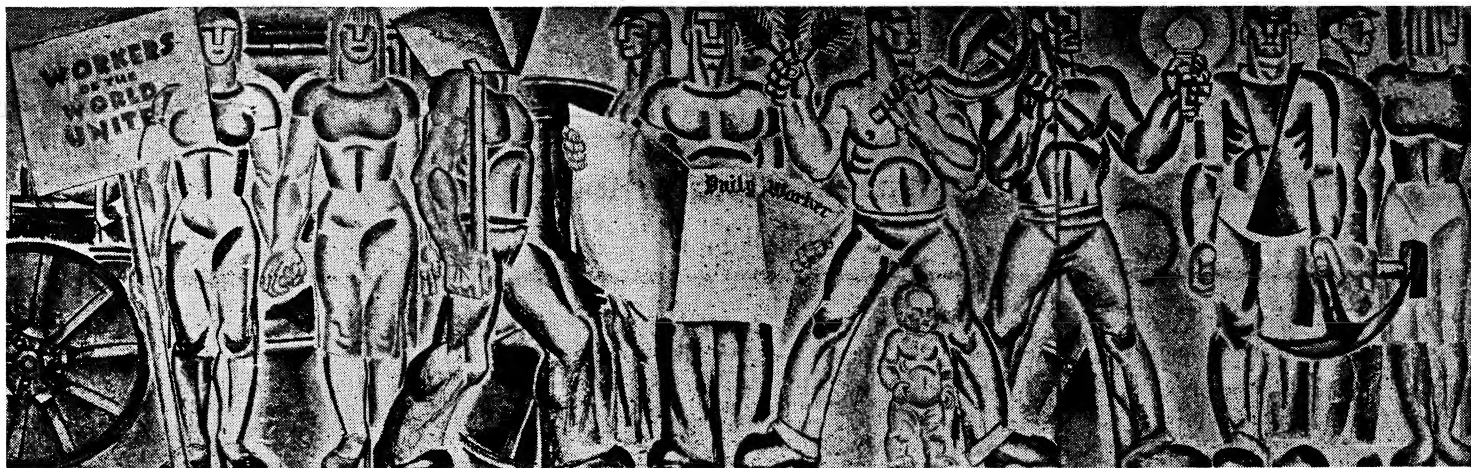
\* \* \* \* \*

The old Masses was a more brilliant but a more upper class affair. The New Masses is working in a different field. It goes after a kind of flesh and blood reality, however crude, instead of the smooth perfect thing that is found in books.

\* \* \* \* \*

The America of the Working class is practically undiscovered.





### From a Labor Mural By Hugo Gellert

Hugo Gellert, one of the New Masses artists, has been realizing a dream he has had for years. Recently, the Proletcos, a co-operative society of left-wing workers, opened an immense new cafeteria at 28 Union Square, New York. Gellert was given the contract for designing and decorating the interior.

He has created a cafeteria that is probably the finest example of modern art in America. Several art magazines have written it up, and the art critic of the ritzy New Yorker reviewed it with more enthusiasm than he has given to the most fashionable exhibitions.

The cafeteria does a rushing business, and caters to about 2,000 people a day. It is not only a restaurant, but a worker's club. And Hugo Gellert, one of the leading revolutionary artists of America, has given this cafeteria the bold modern beauty of the worker's movement. Everything is in harmony with a central design—lamps, tables, floors, ceilings. On the walls Gellert has painted a massive fresco of American labor—Negro workers, women workers, miners, the inside of a steel mill, Sacco and Vanzetti, John Reed, Lenin, Ruthenberg and other symbolic and real figures—ten feet tall.

This cafeteria is worth a visit. It is the first large demonstration in this country of that union of art and labor which is the keynote of Soviet Russia.

It is like a lost continent. Bits of it come above the surface in our literature occasionally and everyone is amazed. But there is no need yet of going to Africa or the Orient for strange new pioneering. The young writer can find all the primitive material he needs working as a wage slave around the cities and prairies of America.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the past eight months the New Masses has been slowly finding its path toward the goal of a proletarian literature in America. A new writer has been appearing; a wild youth of about twenty-two, the son of working class parents, who himself works in the lumber camps, coal mines, steel mills, harvest fields and mountain camps of America. He is sensitive and impatient. He writes in jets of exasperated feeling and has no time to polish his work. He is violent and sentimental by turns. He lacks self confidence but writes because he must—and because he has a real talent.

\* \* \* \* \*

He is a Red but has few theories. It is all instinct with him. His writing is no conscious straining after proletarian art, but the natural flower of his environment. He writes that way because it is the only way for him. His "spiritual" attitudes are all mixed up with tenements, factories, lumber camps and steel mills, because that is his life. He knows it in the same way that one of Professor Baker's students knows the six different ways of ending a first act.

\* \* \* \* \*

A Jack London or a Walt Whitman will come out of this new crop of young workers who write in the New Masses. Let us not be too timid or too modest in our judgments. This is a fact. Keene Wallis, for instance, an ex-harvest worker and I. W. W. will take Carl Sandburg's place in five years. Why ought one to hesitate about stating such a conviction.

\* \* \* \* \*

The New Masses, by some miracle, has gotten out eight issues under the present management, after the magazine had been declared bankrupt, and was about to suspend. We have received no subsidies; we have earned our way.

We can announce now that another year is certain. We feel that year will be fruitful, and may see further clarification of our groping experiment.

Once more we appeal to our readers:

Do not be passive. Write. Your life in mine, mill and farm is of deathless significance in the history of the world. Tell us about it in the same language you use in writing a letter. It may be literature—it often is. Write. Persist. Struggle.

### IGNORANCE AMONG THE LIVING DEAD

By Josephine Herbst

A rejection that is a plain rejection never made me sore. It's all right to be told that it doesn't pay to print stuff like that and think of our audience and we'd like to do it but it can't be done and anyhow I don't like this stuff, what's it about anyhow. That's all right. It's a business. But when somebody swelled up with being connected with publishing begins to tell me how to remodel my works, not, mind you to sell them, but to better them, I see a good deal of red. Where do they get off I want to know? Who gave them the authority to remodel anything? Now your stories are too bitter, what they need is more emotion as if this country wasn't already rotten with emoting authors. You have fine characterization but more tenderness is what you need. Page the Ladies' Home Journal and that tender button, the Bookman. Your work is really too depressing, think, not one character is a hopeful forward looking character. The Russians I suggest timidly, Marcel Proust, and maybe Balzac. But that's a different thing altogether, another age, another side to the face on the barroom floor. What we need today is EMOTION AND TENDERNESS AND MOTHER LOVE. Especially a return of that and of the more wholesome things. And the next thing you do, why not try to make it less—well, less sordid.

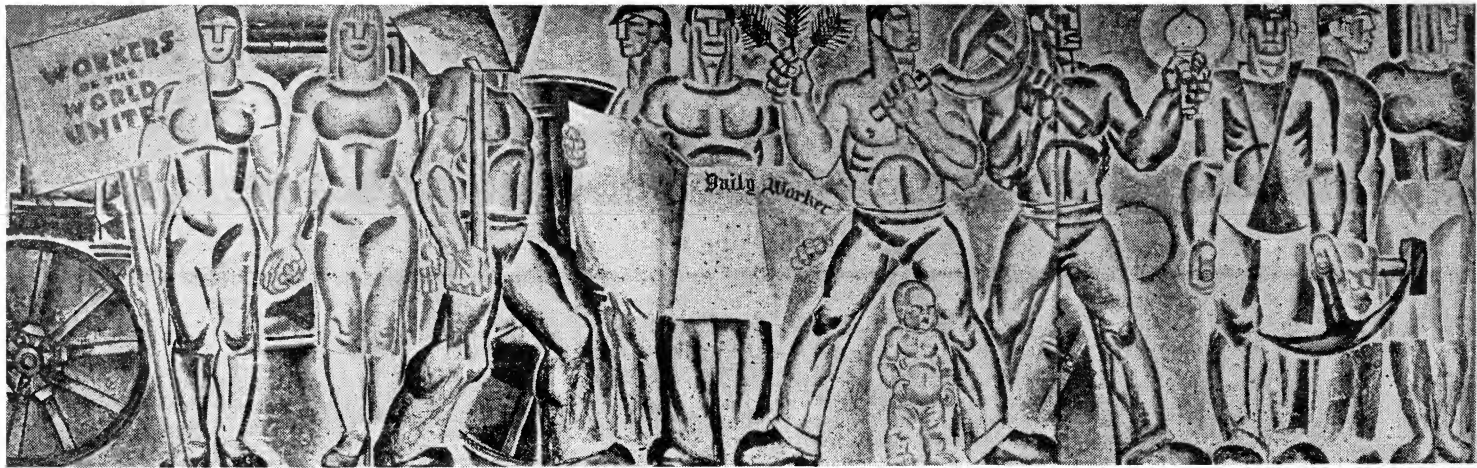
Where does this sense of omniscience about writing come from? From the demands of the trade of course, from notions of publicity and what's what. Nobody knows what that is. The dark horse steals in unheralded always to the surprise of the throng.

But really, you are too hard. For a woman, you are too, shall I say, bitter about life and I can't understand why you should be. People do have good times you know, and look at the happy couples you see around you!

### CHECKER

Inasmuch as he was nephew of the president  
of the Bonner Lumber Mill,  
he was a checker  
with twice our pay.  
It was not that, but his liquor  
cost more  
to help him forget  
our troubles,  
NORMAN W. MacLEOD





**From a Labor Mural By Hugo Gellert**

# PORTRAIT OF A PUBLISHER

By MALCOLM COWLEY

To Mr. John Pontevedra, founder and president of the Griffon Press, we owe what is both a more practical and a more exalted conception of the publishing trade.

Before his appearance in 1916, publishers were comfortably uncertain of their position in the world. They hovered on the vague borders between business and art, between the trades and the professions, meanwhile deriving advantages from each of these fields—from business their profits, from the trades their pride in workmanship, from art a faint halo of romance and sin which did not interfere, however, with their professional dignity. Money was rarely mentioned in their dim offices, where the clerks were underpaid and respectable, where the furniture was scuffed and respectable, where books and traditions stood in orderly rows, and where only the intruding authors had a somewhat furtive look.

A few publishers liked to say with a deprecatory air, "We are businessmen pure and simple," but they were not altogether sincere. In secret they regarded themselves as public servants, whose duty was to care for the minds of the nation in much the same way that dentists cared for its teeth. To this end they provided aseptic novels, mildly bracing essays, therapeutic biographies, all of them bound in cloth as sober as hospital linen. Their profits—their "emoluments" for these services—were never very great.

Unlike his elder rivals, Mr. Pontevedra really believed that publishing was a business, but one of a glorified sort—the business of marketing beauty. He regarded himself as a colleague of the perfumer, the florist, the fashionable dressmaker, the art dealer, the merchant of antiques. Like them, he appealed not only to the aesthetic sense of his potential customers, but also to their desire for the exclusive and their hopes of social superiority. He belonged, in other words, to one of the luxury trades.

Having adopted this view of his function, it was impossible for him to remain in dingy offices among the garment workers. His new quarters, overlooking the Park, were furnished with a sumptuous daring: the reception room was "inspired" by a very modern coffee-house in Munich, and his private office, finished in scarlet and silver, resembled nothing so much as the show-windows of a Fifth Avenue department store. Money was mentioned there; indeed, it was frequently mentioned, but always with decorum and merely as the symbol of beauty and success. Mr. Pontevedra had transmuted copper into a sort of brass currency that passed for gold; he had combined art with business while retaining the best features of both.

Almost his first step on acquiring the defunctive publishing house of Hudkins & Joyce—his first step after changing the name and designing an heraldic griffon as the trade-mark or colophon under which his products would be marketed—his first definitive action was to raise the prices of his books.

Now, the contemporary relations of value and price are so confused, so arbitrary, that price has acquired a value of its own. We might take the example of two antique chairs. They are, let us say, of the same period and design, their condition is almost the same, but one of them sells for fifty dollars and the other for twenty-five. Often it happens that the more expensive chair is really less desirable. Its rungs may be broken and mended, its seat may have been woven yesterday, and yet, in the eyes of its purchaser, it glows with the patina of price; it really gives twice the pleasure that would have been afforded by the less expensive chair.

The case was the same with Mr. Pontevedra's books. When he bound a novel in two slim volumes, enclosed it in an ornamental box, and fixed its price at five dollars, it received a more respectful attention than other novels of the same length which cost two-fifths as much. Perhaps—who knows?—it was even more widely sold. At any rate, there were other publishers who copied his methods, and the public, finding that its reading had grown more costly, began to regard modern literature with a new respect.

Mr. Pontevedra, meanwhile, was improving the physical appearance of his publications. He employed new sorts of paper; he introduced new fonts of type, some of them excellent; he either

abolished margins or made them abnormally wide. He specialized in editions printed on hand-made paper, signed by the author and limited to 79 or 137 numbered copies. He taught his more eager customers to pay ten dollars, or even fifteen, for volumes they would not have borrowed from a public library. In a way, he had transformed the publishing of books into the art of producing bibelots.

His genius was specially evident in his choice of bindings. Deserting the aseptic dulness of red or green linen, he used unexpected materials: chintz, gingham, calico, flowered silk, batik paper, cloth of gold. Book-shelves began to resemble counters of bright toys, and books themselves assumed the air of French hat-boxes or packages containing Viennese candy.

I do not mean to imply that Mr. Pontevedra neglected the contents of his books. On the contrary, his success was founded on attention to details, and he made every effort to harmonize the text of his publications with their quaint bindings and unusual typography.

He specialized in translations from the more esoteric languages: Czech, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, Polish, Serbian, South American Spanish, French and German also received a certain attention. Often the authors chosen were distinguished, but the English versions were almost invariably wretched, for Mr. Pontevedra allowed neither time nor money to his translators. Even the luxury trades have their economical moments.

He also reprinted the classics—the "more robust classics"—on deckle-edged paper and bound them in imitation vellum. The typography of these volumes was exquisite, and, if the proof-



Drawn by Wm. Gropper

## Books In America

A scene in court at one of our numerous 'obscene trials' for "obscenity." The District Attorney has just read some passages relating to thighs from a long poem on Eternity. The poet, who is a New England college graduate, timid, spectacled and frigid, and who has never loved anyone but his wife, his mother and John Keats, is somewhere in the courtroom wondering what it all means.





*Drawn by Wm. Gropper*

## **Books In America**

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reading was rather careless, it mattered very little; after all, they were not intended to be read. They stood on the shelves with an air of restrained sumptuousness, as testimony not only to the culture of their owners, but to the unquestioned distinction of their writers. Often he would refer to the Griffon Classics as "the club of the immortals."

In the field of contemporary American letters, Mr. Pontevedra's influence was even more apparent. His authors were encouraged to assume the condescending manner which passes for sophistication. They did not exactly sneer, but in exaggerated detail, with a "just fancy!" air of amusement and surprise, they described the banality of Elks, the hypocrisy of congressmen, the venial amours of our dead heroes, and thus enabled their readers without study, without efforts at self-improvement, and merely by assuming the same "just fancy!" air—to feel superior to their environment and equal at least in vices to the great men of the past.

His products soon became popular, his colophon was called "the hall-mark of good reading," and even his authors were very widely known. They were indeed *his* authors. Not only did he control their attitude, their style, their choice of subject, but he began to dictate their characters as well. For, there is no doubt that the personality of a writer, today more than ever, helps or destroys the sale of his books, and Mr. Pontevedra was unwilling to leave this important element to chance or nature. Thus, he would say to one author, "You should be known personally to the public. Autograph your books in department stores. Go on a lecture tour this winter. I shall take care of all the arrangements." To another he would give a different sort of advice. "I know your type, Mr. Snykins, and the type of books you write. You should remain a mystery to the public. Go to Capri, the South Sea Islands, anywhere three thousand miles from New York. Write me occasional letters and I shall have them published."

Sometimes he advised a large output: "Write two books a year, Mr. Falk. Otherwise the public will forget you." But he was equally capable of instructing Eva Stephanus to produce only one novel in two years, or one in three. Like a great designer among his mannequins, he gave each of his collaborators a character to be worn in public, like a gown. He told them to be distant, friendly, bold, mysterious, or overwhelmingly great, and he so advertised this manufactured personality that his authors often wondered who or what they were. And then, dismissing these vain reveries, they sat down to produce another book to Mr. Pontevedra's taste.

\* \* \* \*

It is characteristic of his methods that he used to begin with the cover of a book, and to plan the contents so as to carry out the decorative scheme.

Tall, portly, with a lion's body and a sleek aquiline head like



*Drawn by Gropper*

## The Theatre In America

*The producer of a dull musical comedy had a flop on his hands, and was losing money in barrels. His press agents went into a huddle and cooked up another "obscenity" trial. The Judge and Jury obliged, and the show became a hit overnight. And that's the state of the American Drama, if you should ask us.*

the griffon of his trade-mark; with brilliant eyes that were half Castilian, half oriental, he used to sit at his desk examining fabrics. He would feel their texture with his long, artistic, spatulate fingers. Sniffing at them voluptuously, he would fall into a sort of trance. Finally he would select one sample, replace the others in a drawer, and ring for his secretary.

"Ives," he would say, "here is a very attractive material. You will notice its bright colors, its interesting design, and the general effect it gives, which is that of a patchwork quilt. To me it suggests something quaint and vivid, the biography, let us say, of some early American, preferably a woman"—he paused—"who was a good housewife, but not without her faults; she loved men, food, the bottle, and she was something of a heroine. Can you suggest a name? . . . Moll Pitcher, you say? Ah, yes, Moll Pitcher. Let me see, was she the mistress of Stonewall Jackson? No? A Revolutionary character? Ah, perfect, perfect. . . . Ives, I have always thought that Moll Pitcher would be the ideal subject for a biography. Look up her story this morning, Ives, if you have the time. Meanwhile I shall be thinking of an author, which is no easy matter. I tell you, Ives, that nearly half a book is finding the right author."

\* \* \* \*

Three days later, a young writer would be ushered from the green, white and yellow reception room into the scarlet and silver office. He thought of himself as a poet and essayist. He had just submitted a manuscript in which he took great pride—a series of studies in contemporary aesthetics. He was hoping to hear that his work had been accepted.

Mr. Pontevedra, having motioned him into a scarlet armchair, rose meditatively. "We have read your manuscript, Mr. Coggs-well," he finally announced. "It shows great promise, a very great promise. Unfortunately, the times are scarcely favorable to literary essays. Later, perhaps. . . . And meanwhile, I have brilliant prospects to offer you. Mr. Coggs-well, I should like you to write the biography of Moll Pitcher."

Briefly he described the nature of the book. It was to be a biography in the newer manner, with a touch of smartness, an air of cynicism. It would reveal that Moll Pitcher was probably drunk when she fought at Monmouth, and it would prove that her morals were of the most accommodating sort. It would deal lightly with the social background of the Revolution; it would ridicule the pomposity of the American leaders; it would reek of sherry cobbles and rum punch. It would, in other words, be such a biography as the Griffon Press, that year, was issuing by the dozen.

Mr. Pontevedra went on to outline the profits to the author. He mentioned first serial rights, second serial rights, kinematic possibilities, lecture tours, critical approval, fame. He spoke in a general way of royalties without quoting exact percentages. He assured young Coggs-well that it was time for him to become a national figure, everywhere discussed, everywhere praised, everywhere received. Like Peter he opened the doors to golden horizons; like Satan he pointed to the kingdoms of the world. Then, taking consent for granted, he produced the contract, which had already been prepared.

And Coggs-well hesitated. He objected not in the least to royalties or rewards, and yet, before entering this promised land, he turned to look back at the world of letters he was leaving. It was a difficult and complicated world, in which books grew slowly from within and were never tailored to meet a hasty order. It was a small world full of jealousies and arbitrary failures, a world in which success was rarely golden, in which greatness was relative, in which popularity was distrusted. It was really a very difficult and unattractive world; young Coggs-well wondered why he had lived in it so long. And yet. . . . Rising suddenly, he took Mr. Pontevedra's scarlet pen, and signed the contract which promised to glorify him as Florenz Ziegfeld glorifies the American girl.

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

**By William Carlos Williams**

*What's wrong with American literature?*

*You ask me? How much do I get?*





*Drawn by Gropper*

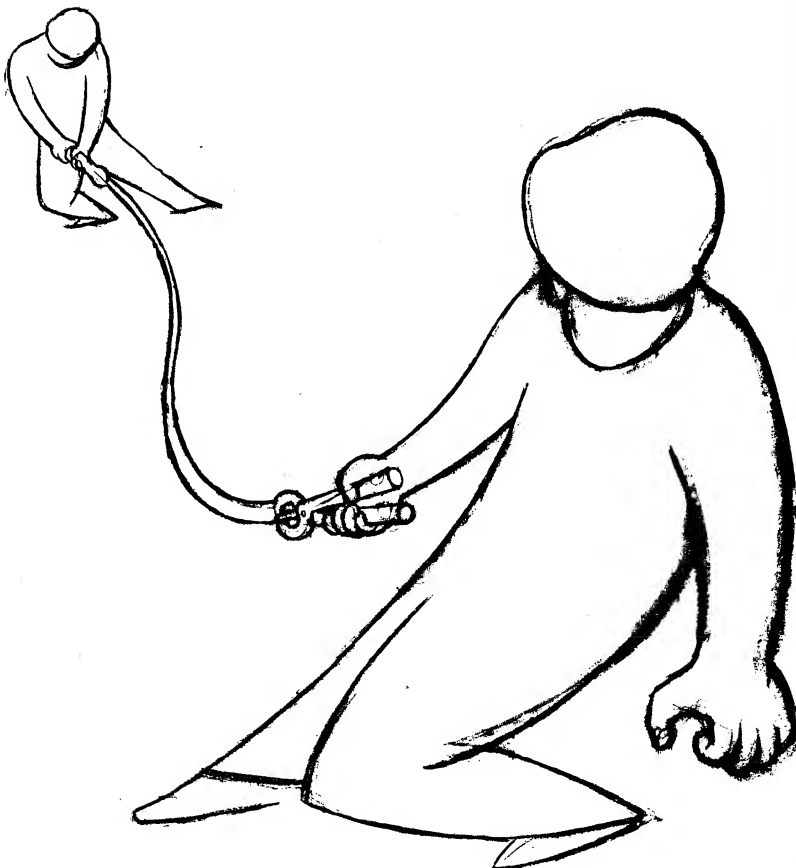
## **The Theatre In America**

*The producer of a dull musical comedy had a flop on his hands, and was losing money in barrels. His press agents went into a huddle and cooked up another "obscenity" trial. The Judge and Jury obliged, and the show became a hit overnight. And that's the state of the American Drama, if you should ask us.*

# SPOILING ON HIS HANDS

By KEENE WALLIS

"Well, I've met the lady  
"who can marry me."  
"Lady, lady, lady,  
"I have found my lady  
"and she takes to me.  
"Boarders, meet the lady  
"and you'll murder me!  
"Yes, tonight we're going  
"to a highbrow play.  
"Masterpiece is showing,  
"she informs me, knowing  
"I'm inclined that way.  
"—Lordy! is it snowing?  
"Must I work today?  
"Darling, are you sleeping?  
"Go ahead, just so  
"nothing happens, keeping  
"you and me from creeping  
"out to see our show.  
"Ma' will have you sweeping  
"if you awake, I know.  
"Darling, are you dreaming  
"that we sit once more  
"planning, planning, scheming  
"while the cold comes streaming  
"up the parlor floor—  
"next, a whistle screaming,  
"and it's half past four!"  
The sun was struggling fickle  
to clear the thickened air



Drawn by Diego Rivera

**Mexican Steel Workers**

and only made it sickly.  
The lad was walking quickly  
and did not feel nor care  
that fog was settling thickly  
in throat and eyes and hair.  
But thought about his lady,  
then slowly of his work  
which kept him from his lady,  
and wondered if the lady  
had made him late for work.  
Took out his watch—"Oh lady!  
"Why won't this damn thing work?"

A spot of light was growing  
through woolly window-grime,  
a shop clock, gilded, glowing,  
with tangled pointers showing  
the moon, the date, the time.  
He got his watch to the going  
then heard a church bell chime.

That clock was wrong! He hurried.  
Then came a rocking blast  
and all the air was flurried  
with flakes of smut which scurried  
as plunging trucks went past.  
He picked his way and, worried,  
he reached the plant at last.

He went right in and greeted  
the ones already there,  
and, washing, phrased a heated  
proposal speech, repeated  
a sonnet, combed his hair,  
came out and soon was seated  
inside his fenced-in square.

What a pile of work was lying  
on the desk for him to do!  
How the boys outside were vying  
at their carbon-pencil plying,  
how the bills and orders flew!  
Day was on. But day was flying,  
and it brought the night for two.

Many times his calculations,  
carbon-pencil marks which shone  
in his desk-light's radiations,  
suffered senseless alterations,  
many times his telephone  
roused him out of meditations  
which he quitted with a groan.

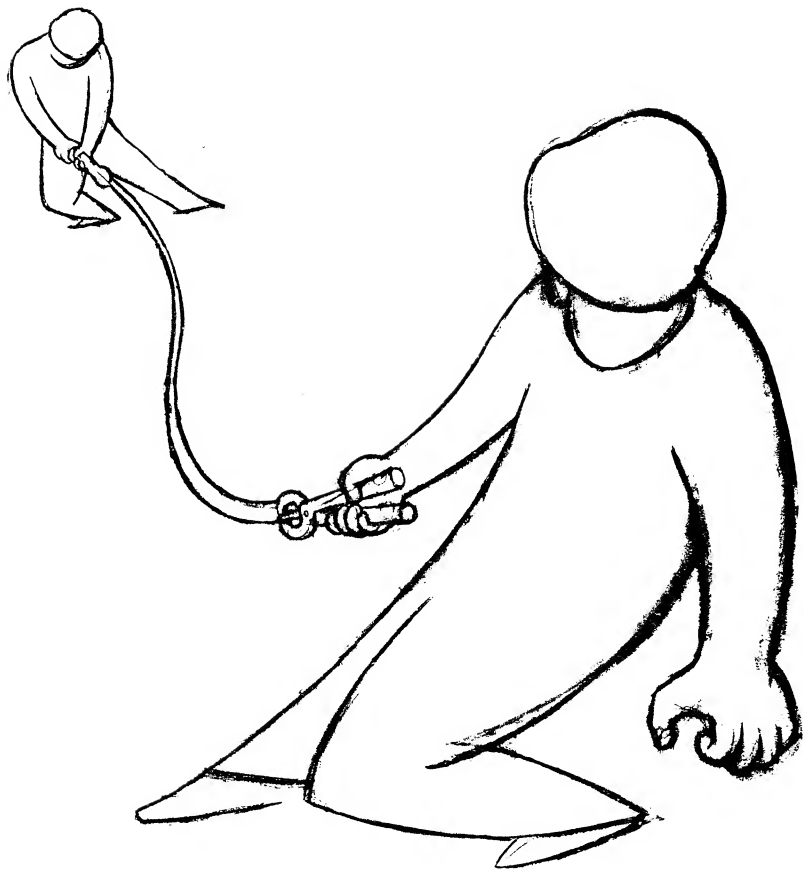
Long and longingly he drifted  
from the thought of his affair  
to the letters which he sifted  
with his nervous hands uplifted  
to the desk-light's stringy glare.  
Long and longingly he shifted  
his positions in the chair.

Sleep was claiming his attention,  
but he fought it from his eyes  
till a curious kind of tension,  
something past his comprehension,  
being strangely formed of sighs,  
lulled him, held him in suspension,  
and he yawned in wide surprise.

Noon was mighty slow in coming  
and could get here none too soon,  
for his teeming head was humming,  
and his fingers, idly thrumming,  
tapped a never-changing tune.  
He must work and quit this drumming!  
Aw, he had all afternoon.

And he had the dearest lady,  
and he had a date tonight





*Drawn by Diego Rivera*

## **Mexican Steel Workers**

with the sweetest little lady,  
with the smartest little lady.  
He would love her up tonight.  
Thinking only of his lady  
he was wishing it were night.

So he worked and mused and waited  
for the morning rush to cease.  
All the "detail" that he hated,  
every order signed and dated,  
brought him nearer night and peace.  
Noon at last. The rush abated  
and the whistles blew release.

He dashed across the street to hustle  
himself in place and get his stew,  
secured a stool by force of muscle,  
read all the signs and felt a rustle,  
a steamy tumult. As it grew,  
the crash, the vapor, and the bustle  
oppressed him and he hurried through.

He paid, and crowding out he swallowed  
with thanks the murky outer air.  
Uptown the newsies screamed and holloed.  
He strolled uptown and idly followed  
with fixed but half unseeing stare  
the heaving motor trucks which wallowed  
through jagged puddles here and there.

He came into the shopping section  
and soon had reached Amusement Row.  
Crowds pushed along in each direction.  
He made his way, with some deflection,  
to where the two had planned to go.  
He stopped to make a brief inspection  
of posters heralding the show.

He bought the tickets, but returning  
with sagging head and lagging feet  
he nagged himself at every turning  
to overcome a hopeless yearning  
to sink exhausted to the street.  
His cigarette was dully burning,  
the taste was dull, it had no sweet.

He came on in, depressed, dejected,  
in time to see the others leap  
from desk and table, and directed  
a janitor to get connected  
with brush and pan, come to, and sweep!  
sat down to view the work expected  
and wished and wished that he could sleep.

Eagerly the pencils started plying.  
Eagerly the negro pushed his broom.  
Scraps and paper sacks were quickly flying  
off the littered floor, and, swelling, dying,  
whistles one by one began to boom.  
Trying not to hear them he was sighing,  
sick of this electric-lighted gloom.

"Darling," he was thinking, "are you waking,  
"rising only now to eat a bite?  
"sleeping while my heart was slowly breaking,  
"maybe you have dreamed how I was aching,  
"out of reach of you and out of sight—  
"just to earn the money I am making.  
"Darling, wish with me that it were night."

Night!—when no man owned him and oppressed him,  
setting him elaborate, inane  
tasks whose insignificance distressed him,  
questions whose absurdities obsessed him.  
Night—with no misuses for his brain.  
Suddenly new confidence possessed him.  
Night and love were worth the daily strain.

Night would bring his crushed imagination  
once again to life to pulse and thrill  
healed of every bruise and laceration,  
reveling in its emancipation.  
Night would give him back his damaged will.  
Day would seem a dim hallucination,  
work the dream of someone who was ill!

Night would surely come and bring his lady.  
Night was bringing her and she the night.  
Work might try to take him from his lady.  
Day might try to hold him from his lady.  
These would pass to nothing in the night.

Nothing now was real except his lady,  
nothing but his lady and the night.

He buckled to the work and kept severely  
from talking matters over in his mind,  
and, sinking all in business, viewing clearly  
the work of his department, while sincerely  
provoked at having got so far behind,  
he grappled with his problems or he merely  
confronted them and instantly divined.

While gaining on his duties he was gaining  
oblivion from thoughts and from desires.  
The deftness of an over-clerk was draining  
the life blood of the man, who, uncomplaining  
like any good machine which never tires,  
was probably unconscious of the straining  
of tightened nerves, high-strung as singing wires.

Half conscious of a body, numb, inflated  
with nausea from the trash that lunchrooms serve,  
half dreading that his rally was belated,  
but wondrously exalted and elated  
by mastery and speed which could not swerve,  
he darted on, intensely concentrated,  
with dangerously active brain and nerve.

When later he was slackening, astounded  
he noticed it was nearly time to quit.  
He finished what was left and, hounded  
by sleeplessness and weariness, he pounded  
his forehead with his fist and swayed a bit.  
The rapture of intensity rebounded,  
and helplessly he let himself admit  
he was not he: each day and all day, working  
and punished if he stole a thought from work.  
If ever any human thoughts were lurking  
within his rented mind they set him shirking  
and hoping as a man and not a clerk.  
Life dwindled then to eating and to clerking  
or starving if we dared to think and shirk?

And every night, all night, he wasted sleeping—  
except tonight, and why not this one too?  
When first he came to town his pulse was leaping  
with boyish aspirations out of keeping  
with humdrum and the kind of life he knew.  
His hopes had crept away—no, still were creeping,  
each workingday deprived him of a few.

And all he had to do was court a lady,  
and all the time he got was in the night.  
No interests were his but in a lady,  
no intellect for him, no, just a lady,  
no leisure time to live in, just a night.  
They took your life and gave you back a lady  
and finally an everlasting night.

Conviction which was violent and heady  
possessed him at the crisis of his woe,  
but wishing he were quit of this already,  
yet vowed to see it through, and keeping steady,  
he waited till the final blast should blow,  
to go back home, clean up and get all ready  
and take a God damned female to a show.

## SORROWS OF A POET

COP: Your Honor, I found this dazed wretch in a Village garret,  
writing a poem for *The Dial*. I charge him with assault of the  
Muse.

POLICE JUDGE: Recite the poem.

COP: It is entitled "Knotted Light" and reads thus—

JUDGE: Oi, oi, that's enough! Too much already, by Jesus.  
Well, what do you say, Wild Eyes, guilty or not guilty?

POET: Ten strands of knotted light whipped to a fine frazzle  
on the ends, like axioms for teakwood. Ten—

JUDGE: Bah! Rot! Snap out of it! Guilty or not guilty, fool?

POET: Ten fools, ten strands of knotted light-fools; ten—

JUDGE: Discharged, freed, let off—NOT GUILTY! Hell, this  
jazzhead is not capable of assaulting the Muse. It takes the *New  
Masses* poets to do that. He was only Tom-peeping at her. Just kick  
him out. Murphy, we don't even care to take his picture for the  
Gallery of Poetic Rogues.

H. H. LEWIS



# [ LENIN ON ART ]

Devoting his whole time to the Revolution Lenin was unable to pay much attention to art. In this respect, Lunacharsky relates he always considered himself incompetent. He hated every form of dilletantism and therefore did not like to express himself on aesthetic questions. Nevertheless his tastes were very pronounced. According to Lunacharsky, he loved the Russian classics and was partial to realism in literature and painting.

In 1905 at the time of the first Revolution he stayed overnight at a Comrade's house where, among other things, he found a series of monographs on the world's great artists. The next morning Lenin said to Lunacharsky:

"How wonderful is the field of the history of art. How much work there is here for Communists. I could not fall asleep till morning; I looked through one book after another; and I regretted that I have no time (and will have no time) to devote to art."

Maxim Gorky relates that one evening after listening to a Beethoven Sonata Lenin said:

"I know of nothing better than the *Appassionata*. I could listen to it every day. It is extraordinary superhuman music. I often think with pride, perhaps with a naive childlike pride, 'Man is able to achieve marvels like these.' But often I cannot listen to music. It affects the nerves too much. It makes you want to talk of stupid things and to stroke the heads of people who, living in this filthy hell can create such beauty. And in our day one must not stroke anybody's head; they will bite your hand off; one must sternly and grimly punch these heads although ideally we are against violence."

In the early days of the Revolution a friend sent Lenin a number of books of poems by Alexander Blok and other modern Russian poets. Lenin returned them unread. The friend asked Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, which poets Lenin preferred to read. She replied that Lenin's favorites were Pushkin, Nekrasov and Beranger.

On the social aspects of literature, Lenin's views were clear and emphatic. While recognizing the great talent of contemporary novelists like Dostoevsky and Tolstoy he always went straight to the heart of their social philosophy and discussed them in relation to the Communist Revolution. Neither admiration for literary talent nor personal affection prevented him from attacking with unequalled lucidity and force reactionary and anti-revolutionary ideas.

In 1913 Gorki published a protest against the Moscow Art Theatres' dramatized version of Dostoevsky's counter-revolutionary novel "*The Possessed*." Gorki attacked the performance as "aesthetically dubious" and "socially harmful." Gorki's protest threw the liberal and reactionary press into a terrific furore. They published a number of articles in defense of Dostoevsky to which Gorki replied with a second article. The discussion revolved more and more about Dostoevsky's central theme, the search for God. Gorki countered by saying that "Gods are not sought; they are created." Though Lenin had a deep attachment for Gorki as a representative of a rising proletarian literature he wrote him a sharp letter:

"You are against God seeking," Lenin wrote to Gorki, "only because you wish to replace it with God making. . . . God seeking is different from God making or God producing etc., no more than a yellow devil is different from a blue devil. To speak against God seeking, not in order to attack all devils and gods, every kind of ideological pestilence (every God is a pestilence, even if he be the purest, most ideal, unsought but created God, it makes no difference)—but merely in order to prefer the blue devil, that is a hundred times worse than not to discuss the matter altogether. . . . God making—isn't that the vilest form of self contempt? Every one who spends his time creating God or even merely permits such creations demeans himself in the vilest way for he devotes his energies not to 'action' but to self-contemplation and self-reflection; such a person lovingly 'contemplates' the most unsavory, the most stupid, the most slavish features—even the minutest of these creatures—of his 'ego' which he seeks to deify by his God making.

"From the social point of view, not from the personal, all God making is nothing but the smug self-contemplation of the stupid petit-bourgeoisie, the brittle Philistine, the dreamy, self-deprecating little bourgeois who is 'desperate and tired.'"

In the case of Tolstoy, also, Lenin attacked the central problem presented by Russia's national novelist. Lenin did not for a moment ignore Tolstoy's genius.

"We do not deny," he said, "and do not intend to deny, Tolstoy's artistic heritage. We cannot throw overboard all the valuable parts of Tolstoy, a genuine artist, who has given to us not only incomparable pictures of Russian life, but also works of the highest type in world literature."

But Tolstoy was no mere spinner of tales, though even if he were his popularity would make him a social mirror. He was the voice of a given social stratum; in his day he was even hailed as a social prophet. What Lenin wanted the workers to ask themselves was: what causes all this roar about Tolstoy? what "weaknesses of our revolution does it express?"

Lenin pointed out with his customary incisiveness that Tolstoy did not understand the proletarian movement; that the revolution was strange to him. Tolstoy used all the power of his artistic genius and all his tremendous influence to demonstrate the futility and the sinfulness of revolution; he tried to convince the masses that they must renounce the class struggle and avoid all forceful resistance to evil. Lenin pointed out that Tolstoy's ideas "are a mirror of the weaknesses and faults of our peasant rebellion; a reflection of the cowardice of a little homely peasant." He saw in Tolstoy an opponent of science and a godseeker, but also the voices of the decaying landed aristocracy, fearing on the one hand the peasant revolution and on the other the growing bourgeoisie. It was the latter fear which impelled Tolstoy to attack certain aspects of the autocracy and of capitalism. For this reason, while attacking Tolstoy's reactionary social philosophy, Lenin added that the bolsheviks would acquaint the working masses with that merciless criticism of capitalistic exploitation which is displayed in Tolstoy's work; to acquaint them with Tolstoy's desire "to do away with the public church, the landowners



**Lenin**

From Hugo Gellert's Labor Mural, Cafeteria, N. Y.



**Lenin**

*From Hugo Gellert's Labor Mural, Cafeteria, N. Y.*

and their rule (these are Tolstoy's own words): to annihilate "all old forms and orders of feudal domination; to clear the land and create instead of the police-class government a commune of free and equal peasants." The bolsheviks would show, Lenin said, how Tolstoy "reflected the painful hatred, which matured into a striving for something better, a desire to get rid of the past, the immaturity of his dreams, his lack of political discipline." To Lenin the death of Tolstoy signified that "pre-revolutionary Russia with its lack of energy and strength, expressed in the philosophy of a genuine artist, had receded into the past."

The Soviet Government has begun publication of Tolstoy in a new edition. This will be the first time Tolstoy's works will be published uncensored, just as they were originally written.

The dependence of bourgeois art on bourgeois economy was described by Lenin in his celebrated article on "Party Organization and Party Literature." Here Lenin exposed the hypocrisy behind the Philistine conception that the contemporary artist should or can enjoy "absolute freedom" or be "above the battle."

"We must tell you, bourgeois individualist gentlemen that your prattle about absolute freedom is sheer hypocrisy," Lenin said. "In a society based on the dictatorship of money, in a society where the masses of workers suffer while little groups of wealthy people loaf, there can be no real 'freedom.' Are you free from your bourgeois publisher, Mr. Author? or are you free from your bourgeois public? which demands pornography from you, which insists that you give them prostitution as a supplement to the 'sacred' art of the drama? Absolute freedom is a bourgeois or anarchist illusion (for anarchism as a philosophy is inverted bourgeois philosophy). One cannot live in a society and be free of that society. The independence of the bourgeois author, artist and actress is merely a pretended independence from the money-bag, from bribery, from being kept."

"We Communists expose this hypocrisy; we rip off the false front; but not in order to achieve a classless literature and art (that will be possible only in a Socialist classless society). We do this in order to oppose to the seemingly free but actually bourgeois bound literature a really free literature which is *openly* bound up with the proletariat."

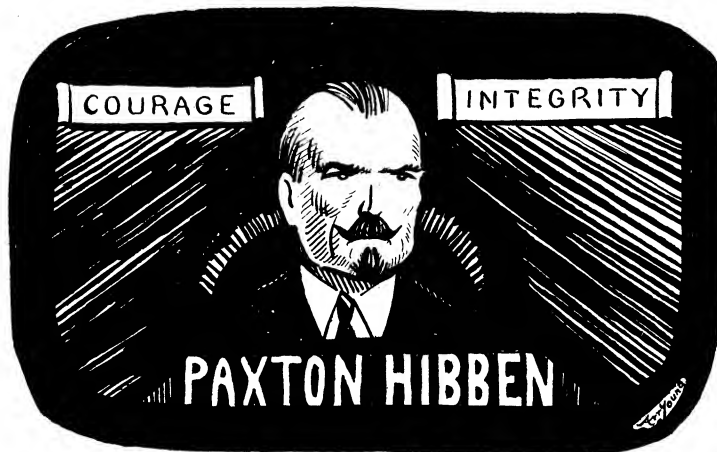
"That will be a really free literature because not profits or ambition but the idea of Communism and sympathy for the workers will constantly recruit for it more and more forces. That will be a free literature because it will serve not the blase heroine, not the bored and overfed upper ten thousand but millions and millions of workers, representing the flower of the country, its strength and its future."

Clara Zetkin describes how she visited Lenin's simple quarters in the Kremlin during 1920. Once when the conversation turned to the avalanche of new artistic forces loosed by the Bolshevik revolution Lenin said:

"The awakening, the participation of forces which seek to create a new art and culture for the Soviet Union is good, very good. The stormy tempo of this development is intelligible and useful, we must and will catch up with what we missed in past centuries. The chaotic fermentation, the feverish search for new solutions and slogans, the acclaim of certain artistic and intellectual tendencies, which are 'crucified' the next day, all this is unavoidable."

"The Revolution (Lenin said to Clara Zetkin) releases all repressed forces and drives them from the depth to the surface. For example, consider the pressure exercised on the development of our painting, sculpture and architecture by the moods and fashions of the Czarist court, as well as by the tastes and love affairs of the gentlemen of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. In a society based on private property the artist produces goods for the market; he must have customers. Our Revolution has removed the pressure of this very prosaic state of affairs from the artists' shoulders; it has made the Soviet state the protector of the artists. Every artist, and every one who thinks he is an artist, takes into consideration his complete right to create freely according to his own ideal, whether his work amounts to anything or not. Thus there arises fermentation, experiment, chaos."

"But of course we are Communists. We must not sit idly by and let the chaos ferment as it pleases. This development also we must direct consciously and clearly and seek to form and define its results. In this respect we still lack a great deal . . . we are far too 'iconoclastic.' One should accept the beautiful, take it as a model, even when it is 'old.' Why should one abandon the really beautiful and discard it once for all as a starting point for further development merely because it is 'old.' Why worship the 'new' as a God which one is bound to obey merely because it is the 'new.' That is nonsense, nothing but nonsense. . . . I have the courage to declare that I am a 'barbarian.' I cannot accept the products



Drawn by Art Young

## We Lose A Friend

Paxton Hibben died the other day, and the world lost one of its finest spirits. The NEW MASSES particularly loses a friend, a contributor and one who ever gave us encouragement. In our greatest difficulties, it was Paxton Hibben who stimulated us to keep going.

From the outbreak of the Russian revolution, Paxton was a stout champion of the first workers' government. He was in Russia then with the Near East Relief. He lost his job, he lost his friends, he was put on trial before the Army authorities, who tried to strip him of his rank of Captain. Alone he reasoned with his friends and courageously fought the yapping chorus that attacked him.

Acting thru his friend, Lunacharsky, minister of education in Soviet Russia, Paxton gave his time and energy to the very end for the maintenance of children's schools in Soviet Russia. Paxton Hibben was not a member of the Communist Party. He was an honest American of revolutionary descent who had not forgotten his fighting heritage. He lived in a different age from his forefathers. He saw in the Soviet government of Russia a new hope for the masses of the world. He voiced it courageously from the platform and in his writings. He fought for the right to express it. He supported the NEW MASSES because he believed in it.

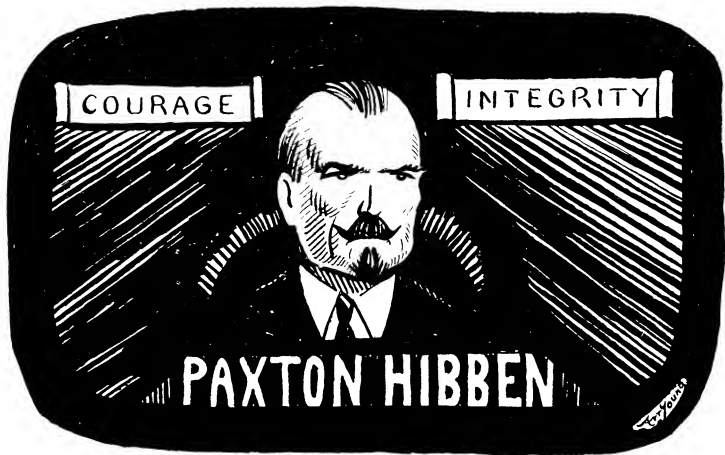
Paxton is gone from us now. We will keep up the fight in which Paxton was with us. There are more such spirits in America. There will be more because Paxton Hibben, rare spirit, helped to blaze the way.

of expressionism, futurism, cubism and other isms as the highest manifestations of artistic genius. I don't understand them. They give me no joy."

The conversation which Clara Zetkin records took place at a time when futurism, imagism and other ultramodern tendencies dominated the literary and artistic centers of the Soviet Union. Next to the folk-poet, Demyan Biedny, the most popular poet in the Soviet Union at this time was the futurist Mayakovsky. The third outstanding poet of this period, Yessenin, called himself an Imagist. In the past few years these cults have lost their dominating position. The overwhelming tendency of current Russian literature is to study the classics for form while drawing on the contemporary life of the Soviet Union for content. Mayakovsky himself, always a journalist as well as a poet has capitulated to this neo-realism by declaring publicly that he has abandoned futurism, though not his futurist friends. He, who once urged painters to abandon the canvas for the poster, has now issued the slogan "back to art" and has graciously "granted an amnesty to Rembrandt." Once more Lenin was a little ahead of the game, but as usual he did not stop with a mere expression of personal taste in matters of art. He continued to Clara Zetkin:

"But what is important is not our opinion about art. Nor is it important what art can give to a few hundred people or even a few thousand out of a population that consists of as many millions as ours. Art belongs to the people, Art must have its deepest roots in the vast creative masses. It must be understood and loved by the masses. Art must organize the feeling, thought and will of the masses . . . let us always have the workers and peasants in mind. For their sake, let us learn economics and arithmetic; let us develop in the field of art and culture."

**NEW MASSES**



*Drawn by Art Young*



# DEATH TO THE LANDLORDS

## A BALLAD OF THE AGRARIAN REVOLUTION IN MEXICO

(Adapted from the Spanish by Michael Gold)

*The day was October the eighteenth  
A day joyous and memorable  
When came Muris and an Engineer  
To give us possession of our lands.*

*Together they viewed the site,  
Our villagers and the two Engineers,  
Walking as far as the Notch,  
The famous Notch de Caballeros.*

*Well, Comrades, they reached this point,  
About eleven o'clock in the morning,  
So the valiant Engineer named Muris  
With his camera took a little photograph.*

*Then we saw Don Carlos Collado,  
Come galloping madly on his horse,  
Angry because he was losing his land,  
And he watched the Engineers at work.*

*From there everyone walked south,  
Measuring the land with great fairness,  
Until they reached a certain point,  
Where lay the Commune's grazing ground.*

*Here they also took measurements,  
Proceeding with exactness and care,  
Very anxious not to encroach  
Upon the orchard of our beloved blacksmith.*

*Then was read aloud the official record,  
Also the measurements of this famous survey,  
So that the face of Don Carlos Collado  
Lost all its natural colors.*

*At this point, the delegate being present,  
And most of the men of our village,  
Also a large group on horseback,  
Another photograph was taken.*

### II

*Viva! shouted the happy Agrarians  
When the meeting was held at night,  
Long live the Agrarian Revolution,  
And Death to the Landlords!*

*It was the night of the seventeenth,  
When this famous meeting was held,  
And a village President was named,  
By means of a real election.*

*No less than two tickets were nominated,  
Just to have things done right;  
And Don Lorenzo was elected,  
By means of a majority of votes.*

\*The Mexican peon is still in the primitive stage where he makes up songs about everything. Every event large or small in the history of Mexico has had hundreds of these corridos written around it, long folk ballads almost photographic in nature. These ballads have a naive charm and ruggedness that is hard to convey in English. The music, improvised to the guitar, is simple, yet beautiful and direct as a child's emotions. The foregoing ballad, first printed in "Mexican Folkways," a fascinating magazine edited by Frances Toor and Diego Rivera, is an account of the provisional distribution of land to two villages, La Garrapata and Mission. It is a good picture of the forces at work all over peasant Mexico, beneath the surface of the newspaper romances. The peon wants land; that is the core of this ballad, as it is the core of the Mexican Revolution.

*On the platform sat Don Fructuoso and Don Lorenzo,  
Those men of justice and good will,  
And on their right hand there sat also,  
Our own Comrade Pesina.*

*Well, then, it being three in the morning,  
Our Don Enrique made the suggestion,  
That a photograph should be taken  
Of all the committees, also.*

*Everyone agreed that on the front bench,  
Should sit the members of the Administration,  
And behind their shoulders should stand  
The entire Executive Committee.*

*Before I forget let me mention  
That on the Executive were the following;  
Comrades Cipriano and Magdaleno,  
And our beloved Florentino Aguilar.*

*And now I'll give no more details  
Which may be hard to understand,  
But will add it was four in the morning  
When we stopped to eat and have some fun.*

### III

*This is what the Agrarians were saying:  
"Things look good, but to cinch the matter  
"We ought kick Don Carlos out forever,  
"Anyway, let's sing La Golondrina."*

*So La Golondrina was sung and played  
With much fervor and great success,  
Until even Don Carlos Collado,  
Kicked up his heels and shouted, "Viva Mexico!"*

*Well, Comrades, I live on a rancho  
Where a river shines like silver,  
And since I haven't any money,  
I bring my comrades this ballad to use.*

*And the reason I don't sign my song  
Is because I don't give a damn about such trifles;  
Who knows but that tomorrow morning,  
I may have to grab a rifle to defend our land.*

*Well, Comrades, with this I'll say goodbye,  
I am a man who is free and fearless;  
If you still want to know who I am,  
My friends call me the Wild Apple Tree.*

### JOYCE KILMER

*He had his charming little say  
About a tree  
That lifted leafy arms to pray  
All night, all day;  
And, I agree,  
It was a charming little lay.*

*The poet for a gentle guide  
Looked upward then;  
But with the worms of war allied,  
For blood he cried,  
A killer when,  
Polluted in his own, he died.*

H. H. LEWIS

## ART THEORY

*A continent grows meaningless syllabized  
while festerings of culture  
play grandstand serenade to plausible  
minorities . . . each to infinitesimal selves  
that crave legitimate redundancy . . .  
so much for that,  
not that lumber mills, factories,  
and railroad nations with president stogies  
hanging above swivel chairs with peons  
bringing in prosperity.  
Nothing appalls  
and jingling beauty keeps on repeating itself.*

NORMAN MACLEOD.



## Workers and Intellectuals

A panel from the famous murals by Diego Rivera, Communist painter, in the Agricultural Building, Mexico City. It will be noticed that the workers think the bourgeois intellectuals are amusing.

THEY BLOW WHISTLES FOR  
THE NEW YEAR

*Forty men, maybe more  
think:  
time crawls like caterpillar  
time is a white worm  
Boring into steel.*

*The new year comes like a stallion  
in harness*

*saying:  
Men are flyspecks  
on white parchment of life.*

*She comes like a fat wench  
slow uncertain of purpose  
it does not matter.  
It does not really matter.  
Whistles screech like horses in pain  
tugboats in harbor roar  
foghorns flatulate  
There shall be much wine spilled on the table today,  
and many drunks will be carried out feet first.*

*And forty men  
hearing the noise  
will stop the wheels of thought.  
Forty men, maybe more,  
miners, railroadmen, textileworkers,  
peering through iron bars  
ask the day  
what the hell is all the noise about?  
There seems to be no answer.*

JOSEPH KALAR

## AND HOW!

*Two black hands chase each other  
around a white disc—  
in a preordained circle  
in a preordained manner  
until they become absolutely vertical;  
and stretching one on top of the other  
they produce the hour of noon.*

*And the office doors swing wide.  
And Manhattan's slender white towers  
spew forth little upright particles  
of life  
that pour along the streets.  
And the well fed hundreds of thousands  
that are broken by life  
that personify being broken by life  
that deify being broken by life  
that are educated to be broken by life  
that are proud to be broken by life  
the streets are theirs  
all theirs,  
the streets belong to the lost ones  
the decadent ones who deny the destruction  
of life by worms—  
they have the streets.*

*Verily the minute was made from the rib of the hour!  
(Surely an Eden has been somewhere lost)  
And those two black hands  
that chase each other around a white disc  
in a preordained circle  
in a preordained manner  
are bigger than we think  
are older than we think  
the stars are sparks from their adamant track  
the earth is the swollen belly of one of  
their children—*

*and OH BOY it's big with life  
OH BOY it's big with life*

AND HOW!

PORTER MYRON CHAFFEE



## Workers and Intellectuals

A panel from the famous murals by Diego Rivera, Communist painter, in the Agricultural Building, Mexico City. It will be noticed that the workers think the bourgeois intellectuals are amusing.

# [ JACK LONDON [By MARTIN RUSSAK]

## America's First Proletarian Writer

Among the extensive bibliographies in the *ABC of Communism*, the international primer of the revolution, Bukharin gives only one book by an American author. It is Jack London's fantastic novel *The Iron Heel*.

Jack London is thus placed alongside of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Bukharin. This is right and proper. All proletarian writers, whether they write novels or economic analyses, are equally important to the proletariat. Marx is as much a proletarian writer as Gorki.

A real proletarian writer must not only write about the workingclass, he must be read by the workingclass. A real proletarian writer must not only use proletarian life as his material, his writing must burn with the spirit of revolt. Jack London was a real proletarian writer—the first and so far the only proletarian writer of genius in America.

Workers who read, read Jack London. He is one author they have all read, he is one literary experience they all have in common. Factory-workers, farm-hands, seamen, miners, newsboys read him and read him again. He is the most popular writer of the American workingclass.

There are writers who have been "radical" without being proletarian. Upton Sinclair is an example of this type. In Sinclair's novels the proletariat is always discovered from above, the proletariat is described from an upper-class point of view, and a worker gets the lurking impression that the author is doing him

a voluntary kindness. There is sympathy and indignation here, but no acceptance of class solidarity and no revolt.

There are writers who give excellent descriptions of the life of workers without being proletarian to the slightest degree. Dickens, in *Hard Times*, gives an excellent description of the life of workers in an English textile center of the nineteenth century. Zola, Conrad, Dreiser, Eugene O'Neill execute similar performances for other sections of the workingclass. But they are far from being proletarian writers. They are clearly bourgeois writers. They merely used for their own purposes certain proletarian material that lay ready to their hands.

Jack London came directly from the proletariat. He belonged to the proletariat. He was a proletarian before he ever dreamed of becoming a writer. He was proud of his proletarian blood, he sang the praises of toil and proletarian labor. He saw life with the eyes of a proletarian. When he wrote about the upper-classes he wrote from the point of view of a proletarian observer. This fact is fundamental in any attempt to understand Jack London.

London derived the power that was his from two sources: his proletarian background and his fierce hatred of the bourgeoisie. He did not write for the workingclass, he did not write for the revolution. He wrote for himself, he wrote to express the tumultuous actions and reactions of Jack London. But being Jack London, being a proletarian, a rebel and a revolutionary, possessing the proletarian actions and the bourgeois reactions that he did possess, he could not be anything else than the great proletarian writer he was on every occasion when he permitted himself to be honest.

A writer must either express himself or offer pinchbeck wares to his public. Good writing has always been re-creation of the author's experience. Hence a proletarian writer must first be a proletarian—whatever social stratum he comes from—must first possess bitter hatred, absolute class solidarity, and revolutionary passion.

Inevitably, Jack London had the strength and the weakness of the revolutionary movement of his time. Always a wobbly at heart, the spirit of the wobbly—the spirit of Bill Haywood and John Reed—heroic, fiery, and adventurous—will live forever in the pages of his rebel stories.

Where is the great writer so full of flaws, so uneven, as Jack London? Yet his shortcomings do not matter. We forgave him the injection of Maud into *The Sea Wolf* and the Horatio Alger endings of some of his stories. Life has no plots, and literature often betrays an honest writer into ridiculous acrobatics. There remain in sufficiency *The Valley of the Moon* with its unequalled pictures of workingclass life, *Martin Eden* with its indictment of individualism and its lesson of loyalty to the proletariat, *Before Adam*, *The People of the Abyss*, the stories of fishermen, wanderers, laborers, prize-fighters, the tales of the North, the tales of revolution, and the first great classic of America's proletarian literature—*The Iron Heel*, his masterpiece.

A proletarian writer must be a better writer than the bourgeois writers. A proletarian writer must have better technique and greater power. His is the huge task of pioneering, of establishing new values, of satisfying the urgent need for the creation of his own forms where old forms no longer suffice. He builds the foundation of the future, and he must build solid.

Jack London was a better writer than any bourgeois writer of his time. He was greater, far greater, than all of them. He knew it; we just begin to realize it. He could write better prose, he could create better characters, he could tell better stories, he could think more deeply, he could feel more thoroughly, and he did all these things. He bested the bourgeois writers at their own game. Before the flame of his fertility, versatility, and vitality their work shrivels into so many petty straws.

Language for Jack London was a means of expression, not an ornament. Style for him was not a pattern of words, but a pattern of ideas. His style has the same firm, stripped, active qualities as the style of Gorki and of Lenin.

Literature for Jack London was no plaything for leisure hours. It was a phase of class struggle. The bourgeoisie uses art as a weapon in the class struggle against the proletariat. The work of Jack London says to us: Let us snatch that weapon out of the hands of our enemies and turn it against them!



Drawn by G. Kolska





*Drawn by G. Kolska*

## **The Sky Pilot**

# JOE HILL [By RALPH CHAPLIN]

(A Tribute to the Great-Hearted Poet of the I. W. W.)

Joseph Hillstrom, or Joe Hill, as he is more commonly known, probably came about as close to being the Laureate of Labor as any poet the workingclass movement has yet produced. He had the common touch combined with the true singing instinct, he had common sense and vision and was a fighter in the spirit most admired by the rank and file. Joe Hill was not troubled with the qualms and foibles of the parlor high brow. He came right out of the heart of the working class. His life had been hard—that of the migratory worker or unskilled slave of modern industrialism. His chief virtue lies in the fact that his songs reflected faithfully the proletarian environment that surrounded him from the day he was born until the day he died.

Joe Hill's story is full of the color, romance and adventure of proletarian life. From the time he landed in New York, a raw emigrant boy from Sweden, until the moment he gave the order for the firing squad at the Salt Lake penitentiary to riddle his young breast with bullets, his life and spirit were true to form as far as the revolutionary workingclass movement is concerned. He was a rebel against the system of exploitation and misery which is known as Capitalism. His songs and poems were born out of the sweat and anguish and uncertainty of his daily life on the high seas, the long-shore, or in the harvest fields, the woods or mines ashore.

Joe Hill learned to speak English while working as a sailor on the ships plying between Sweden and England. In his own country he had worked on the railroads and at odd jobs. No doubt he came to America—the land of opportunity—like thousands of other young foreigners, filled with the ambition to make his way and find "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," in the land of the free and the home of the brave. Whatever his dreams were they were rudely dispelled by harsh reality as soon as he started out to find a master in the mighty eastern metropolis. Polishing cuspidors in a Bowery saloon seems to have been his first experience.

Joe Hill evidently didn't like New York so well and so after a month or so of this he came on to Chicago where he tried to find his vision in a big machine shop. Joe Hill clung to this job desperately, waiting no doubt for the manifold blessings of Democracy to manifest themselves, but he was again disappointed. At this stage Joe might possibly have become a skilled union mechanic or might have drifted into the building trades and become a neatly dressed Swede carpenter with red hands and naive blue eyes full of dreams and puzzlement. He might have acquired a home and a flivver and a family of tow-headed, red cheeked Americans. But fate, it seems, had decreed otherwise. Joe went west, working his way in the harvest fields and construction camps, learning from actual experience what the machine process means for the workman in America.

Just what happened to Joe Hill on his way to California, history has failed to record. But he had been doing a lot of thinking and no doubt reading also. By the time he reached the west coast he was familiar with Marxian economics and the technique of agitation. He had learned the great lesson of the need for workingclass organization. He was a member of the I. W. W. This was when Joe Hill first started to sing. After "Casey Jones," written during the big S. P. strike, song after song came from his pen in rapid succession, each one more popular than the last. Joe had become a typical western "stiff," living in jungles, shack, houseboat or mission between jobs, and writing and singing the songs that have since become famous all over the world.

Joe Hill lived in California a long time making a precarious living for himself and devoting his talent and energy to the task of building up the One Big Union of the workers of the world in which he so ardently believed. But finally the urge came over him again to return to the East and revisit some of the scenes of his earlier experiences in the class struggle. Rumor has it also that there was a girl in the case; but this is apocryphal. He went to Salt Lake City and found work at Bingham. Here he proceeded as usual to organize the workers. This was the beginning of the end. What happened to Mooney, Cline, Sacco, Vanzetti and a host of others happened to Joe Hill. He was charged (of all things!) with

murder. He was tried, convicted and in due time shot to death by a firing squad in the penitentiary at Salt Lake. He continued to write songs and poems almost to the moment of his execution.

His body was shipped to Chicago where he was cremated in order that his ashes might be strewn to the winds as he had wished. His funeral, attended by tens of thousands of his fellow workers, was one of the largest and most picturesque ever held in Chicago. His song, "Workers of the World Awaken," words and music composed in prison, is perhaps one of the best examples of his art:

*Workers of the world, awaken!  
Break your chains, demand your rights.  
All the wealth you make is taken  
By exploiting parasites.  
Shall you kneel in deep submission?  
From your cradles to your graves?  
Is the height of your ambition  
To be good and willing slaves?*



**Americas First Labor Poet -- Joe Hill**

*Like Sacco and Vanzetti, he was murdered on a framed-up charge by American capitalism. He wrote Pie in the Sky, Hallelujah, I'm a Bum, and other I. W. W. classics.*



## **Americas First Labor Poet--Joe Hill**

*Like Sacco and Vanzetti, he was murdered on a framed-up charge by American capitalism. He wrote *Pie in the Sky*, *Hallelujah, I'm a Bum*, and other I. W. W. classics.*

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The Prison Scene from "Singing Jailbirds"

## SOVIET MOVIES AND OTHERS

Jack Reed did better than Eisenstein with "Ten Days That Shook the World." The movie is a hectic sequence of anecdotes and pictures. It sparkles at times, there are shots of real beauty. There are splendid shots of Lenin in action on his return from hiding at the outbreak of the October uprising. Eisenstein lets us see Revolution in action. Here she is, tearing up the old roots, raging in the streets, giving birth to the proletarian dictatorship. It is all terribly beautiful as lightning. But it veers too often on chaos. Endless, seemingly aimless street fighting becomes monotonous in this movie. The film lacks unity.

Better was "The End of St. Petersburg." In its simplicity and directness this was the art of the movies as we have not seen it since "Potemkin." The bourgeois critics praised it, but in self protection were careful to label it "Propaganda, accept with care." It is propaganda. It presents class against class. It shows up the horrible role of the Russian ruling class and the ridiculous one of the Church that served it. Never was war so realistically, mercilessly presented. The war-profiteer, the spineless liberal and social democratic role of Kerensky are exposed. Propaganda? No, art, but the label of propaganda is attached carefully to any work of art in which labor is victorious.

"Three Comrades and One Invention" is the first Soviet comedy to reach this country. Simple, slow-moving, it is also warm and unexplainably human. It has a different quality from Hollywood slap-stick and it is altogether delightful. It is like the broad humor of Mark Twain. Under the guise of good-natured kidding this movie criticizes bureaucracy in workers' Russia. It pokes the worker into an appreciation of technical progress, it burlesques the short-comings of the Soviet workers themselves. Here are the so-called Bolshevik "fanatics" riding each other like a bunch of college boys. The picture has none of the genius of Chaplin, nor his technical perfection. But I am sure Chaplin will like it. The picture is human and sincere and these are qualities present in Chaplin's genius too.

"White Shadows in the South Seas" comes close to greatness and misses. It exposes the predatory role of our aggressive, profit-seeking civilization. Into an Eden of the South Seas the white man comes with booze, printed calico, disease and exploitation. But the picture goes only part of the way and has its goodly share of hokum. No danger that Hollywood has gone Bolshevik. Some unusually fine photography in this picture.

"The Four Devils" directed by Murnau is "Variety" swiped, denatured and lollypopped. The grim strength of "Variety" is turned to Hollywood mush. The leading characters are as prettified and as barren of character as a Saturday Evening Post cover. Let's not talk about the story—or any more about this picture. It's soothing syrup.

W. C.

## SINGING JAILBIRDS

The New Playwright's Theatre production of Upton Sinclair's *Singing Jailbirds* calls for the support of every class-conscious worker and intellectual in America. It is a worker's play, a human document written with blood on the souls of the masses.

Upton Sinclair has not written a masterpiece, but he has written a folk-drama that comes near being a masterpiece with the assistance of Em Jo Basshe and his associates at the New Playwright's Theatre who felt the epic tragedy in this passionate tale of injustice and oppression. To the worker it is an old story. It tells of a group of I. W. W. arrested for singing on the picket line during a dockworkers' strike. Six hundred of them are crowded into tanks in a filthy jail. They roar defiance at the cops and the district attorney. They sing their revolutionary songs from their little red book. Threats of brutality arouse them to fervent chanting of "Scissorbill" and "Solidarity Forever." Their jailers close the windows of the tank to stop their singing. The prisoners sing on. The jailers turn on the steam, but the singing goes on until one by one they drop from exhaustion, choking for air, cursing their captors, and cheering the One Big Union.

The Wobbly leader, Red Adams, is locked up in solitary after refusing to betray his comrades. Loneliness, the dark, the silence, the staccato tap-tap of running rats, the pain of his bleeding head, the damp stinking air, the decaying food and dirty water, fear for his fellow-workers, a hundred things beat him down to a mass of trembling nerves. He becomes delirious. Memories of the past come to him. He remembers his wife, who died from an abortion. The poor cannot afford to have children. He remembers his days in the jungles with the boys, his adventures on the open road, his battles against the bosses. There are moments of lucidity when he tries to control his nerves, pitifully counting the days, exercising, trying to "improve his mind." And then again delirium, calling his fellow-workers to fight, fight, to sing, to nail the I. W. W. preamble to the masthead and build the new society within the shell of the old. He imagines himself the center of a trial, and the dramatization of this trial is a bitter caricature of the court proceedings when a labor-leader is up for "justice." The final disintegration comes soon after. He dies, attacked by rats. And as he dies, there is a singing in the background. The masses are marching, chanting their revolutionary call to battle.

*Singing Jailbirds* is technically far from perfect. Intrusions of irrelevant material, always a fault of Sinclair, are innumerable in this play. In fact, *Singing Jailbirds* is not a play at all from one point of view. It does not tell a story and it has very little action. It is a symphony of emotions and pictures, a composite of a dozen striking photographs. But as presented by the New Playwrights Theatre, it is one of the most effective impressions of the class-struggle that the American stage has seen. It is a folk-play, treating the life of the people in the language of the people, singing the songs and ballads of the workers and hoboes. Propaganda? Certainly it is propaganda, as every revelation of the truth is propaganda. And *Singing Jailbirds* is truth, first because it is based on an actual incident, but above all because it tells of things that all of us have seen and felt and suffered for.

With this production, the New Playwrights Theatre again demonstrates the need for a proletarian theatre in America. For five years Sinclair peddled the play, without success. Even such "non-commercial" institutions as the Guild and the Provincetown turned it down. It was not until the founding of the New Playwrights Theatre, consciously revolutionary, that the play had a chance to be staged. Such plays as *Singing Jailbirds* will some day inspire the creation of a revolutionary American art. And such theatres as the New Playwrights will undoubtedly play a major role in the creation of that art. The recent failure of *Gods of the Lightning* is another proof. There was a play never intended for the Broadway theatres and the pot-bellied brokers and their silk-shod mistresses. It was intended for a workers' theatre. The American playwrights who want to tell the truth must learn that they cannot flirt with Times Square. A visit to the Provincetown Playhouse, where *Singing Jailbirds* is being shown, would do them good. Em Jo Basshe must be thanked for the remarkable job he has done with Upton Sinclair's opus.

LEWIS ROGERS.



**JANUARY, 1929**



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## Dreiser on Hollywood



Any movement, the aim of which is to penetrate the indifference of luxury-crazed Americans and produce in them genuine emotions is handicapped from the start. Each of the arts in America has been reduced rapidly to a money-making level, and there is no better example of the enormity of this degradation than the cinema.

The average American-made films give everything money can buy—high-salaried puppets, costly sets, elaborate costumes—and yet—almost, not entirely—they have failed to arrive at anything worth while.

On the other hand, the influence of the movies on the American public has been greater than any other force. Yet this has been used for nothing more than to create in the public a demand for the *new* (within certain iron-bound limits); to complete their eclipse within narrow circles. Any artistic quality or real sincerity which accidentally finds its way into the Hollywood-made film is lost in the sham and crudeness of its whole.

Again, in America, where means of transportation and the rapid distribution of ideas have been perfected, it is all the more difficult to fight the money lust (which is synonymous with the luxury lust and symptomatic of it)—for money seekers and holders of money for money's sake invariably have control of almost all the facilities for the development or restraint of anything. Hence, since pure art is in the main inutile, my sympathies and my appreciation are always with and for any group which undertakes to sacrifice at least some money for art. And in this connection especially am I in accord with the Film Arts Guild, which, as I sincerely believe, is opposed to the American cinema magnates on the ground that they are more or less concentrated on the bastardization of the cinema, not only with wearisome nonsense in regard to sex and romance, but now with the talking pictures, the aim of which apparently is to exhume old stage

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plays which can be reproduced poorly and cheaply, yet be made to pay well.

In fact, as I see it now, the artistic destiny of the screen is either now or soon, maybe, in the hands of the little cinema movement, of which the Film Arts Guild is a pioneer organization. Indeed, it strikes me as one of the most important of these opposing groups in America, which works with the same tools the larger group does, yet have turned their material to artistic effect. It has thrown off the impedimenta of the star system, the cut-and-dried story as opposed to the imaginative, and added the artistic use of light, shadow and movement as well as the development of story material which is basically cinematic and not merely photographed literature. Whereas the Hollywood pictures reach out and grasp any plot at hand, grind out some close-ups of the hero and heroine clasped in a parting or never-to-be-parted-again embrace, throw in some atmosphere, and apply to the whole the grand word—"epic"—the Film Arts Guild is conscious of the limitations of the material which can be used effectively, and has intelligently employed this material to truly artistic ends.

This being so, the only hope for true advance appears to lie in the little cinema theatres, which should, and I hope will, act as havens for artistic American as well as European productions and such experimental efforts of "amateurs" here as many have the real interests of the screen as art truly at heart.

The only other country which is seriously interested in developing the inherent possibilities of the screen is Russia. In other words, Russia refuses to adapt stage technique for its cinema but is trying to develop a new technique which is "cinema" as opposed to "theatre." And the Film Arts Guild as I see it, has been quick and first to recognize the superiority of this method as opposed to the American money method. It has not only sponsored Russian Films in America, but better, has constantly emphasized such aspects of the film art as are inherently opposed to merely meretricious and ignorant entertainment—the guide and light of the Hollywood lords.

I extend my compliments to this movement as represented by the Film Arts Guild and all others. I wish them well. Indeed, my sincere hope is that their influence may be felt increasingly throughout America.

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# LIBERALISM AND THE LITERARY ESOTERICS

[By HERMAN SPECTOR]

This article has one sufficient purpose: to show why the farcical literateur, the psychotic dilettante, is received with so much applause and reverence by the "enlightened" sophisticates of modern bourgeois society; and incidentally, why those big sales on modernistic furniture go over so well in the department-stores. If this is the age of the freak in matters esthetic—and to judge by the work of our more successful modernist artists, it certainly is—then I believe the fact can be explained, sociologically. The explanation hinges upon the concepts of liberalism, the bourgeois substitute for a scientific education.

Why is it that the man of genius and the scientist, in past generations as well as our own, has had only contempt for the "liberal," as the term is currently applied? Why is it so easy for every half-educated and uninspired shopkeeper to warm up at once to the tenets of the liberal philosophy? What is responsible for the mass of cynico-sentimental, "rationalistic," nihilistic intelligentsia who float about the streets and theatres of New York, bursting with philosophical conversation and booze? Why is Maxwell Bodenheim? The number of literate persons in America must be very high, but we would like to find out what the hell they are literate about. America reads more books and wears more spectacles than any other country on the map, and in America the liberal tradition, in its vulgarized version, is strongest. By "vulgarized version" I mean merely applied liberalism, for the liberal philosophy has proven to be corrupt in essence, regardless of what important work has been done by the really brilliant men who have contributed to its original luster. These pioneers will be recognized and remembered for their merits, for they represented the best thought of a once revolutionary bourgeoisie, but the ideology they nurtured has proven a futile one.

What I am saying is by no means new to communist thought. We already know that the liberal is a fellow who professes to be beyond-good-and-evil, free from ordinary human prejudices, a man who assumes in himself the utmost objectivity, the "olympian detachment" about which we hear so much. We know that the liberal is a stand-patter (although obsessed with a vague notion of "progress"); an ascetic or nihilist in his attempted escape from earthly subjectivity; and all in all a very fragmentary sort of thinker with no motivating ideals for the correlation of literature with life. He is not a static thinker, his thought is fluid enough, he favors the theory of the Bergsonian flux, evolution, and freudian optimism. It is the classicist who is a static. The liberal is no classicist, he believes in an "advance," he may even favor radicalism for this very reason, though not because he has acquired a scientific bias. He pretends to no bias whatever. He ridicules everything, he is a cynic, and he soon deserts the pose of radicalism when it becomes too uncomfortable. He has little enough courage to follow any cause, he exalts his weaknesses and pathological traits as virtues (as, psychoanalysis), and he is really an anti-intellect, though his vulgarization of the term, intellectual, has brought it into bad repute. So we have in the liberal a coward, a pervert, and a nihilist. And to such a man, whose thought springs from roots of bourgeois cynicism and despair, the modern esoterics, who pander to and exaggerate his own infirmities, possess an irresistible appeal. However, it would be pertinent, before going into the psychology of the "new art," to explain the part of the intellectual in the communist program.

Naturally, I am pro-intellect, as I believe every real communist is, for this is implied in the furtherment of life. If communism meant a denial of life and a vulgarization of the intellect, I would cease to be a communist. But it is the bourgeois cynic, the Greenwich-Village type of parasite, who is fundamentally anti-life and anti-intellect. The communist looks upon the functionings of intelligence in the most natural and scientific light, and wants more of it. However, in the program for world-advancement and the overthrow of oppressive capitalist forces, two things should be carefully noted. First, the already-present vulgarization of words must be taken into account. Just now the word "intellectual"

means very little, and Lenin and Trotzky used the term with contempt, as signifying the Hamlet, the sentimentalist functioning *in vacuo*, the academic scholar, pedantic and corrupt. Neither Trotzky nor Lenin nor Marx had any contempt for the sincere processes of thought, they did not employ the term "scientific socialism" in vain. But if we are to call our newspaper columnists, novelists, fashionable poets and panders of all sorts *intellectuals*, then we may discard the term with profit. *And speedily, it must be remembered, above all, that this civilization is made possible only through the productive efforts of the WORKER, and that this is going to be a WORKERS' WORLD*, wherein all will be workers, and thinkers. It is true that there shall be *compulsion* to work, and *encouragement* to think, but this is as it should be. Fundamentally, this will be a world of equalized economic distribution, and the intellect which would play an authentic part at this stage of our culture must be social-minded and proletarian. That intellect which is still circumscribed and hampered by such concepts as "individualism," "liberalism," etc., can not hope to be able to interpret the life of today. For with all the good will in the world, we must recognize that education is a fact, and that writers who deal with life must know of the basis of that life, and take some position with regard to it. They can not function then as romantics except for the purpose of providing an idle hour's diversion, in the manner of the comic-strips. We usually think of literature and art as more than diversion. Certain innocuous kinds of poetry and the plastic arts, at times, may be decorative: for profound values received, however, we need the word *education*. No writer can educate us who is not educated politically, himself.

To return to the school of "new art," which embraces such famous esoterics as Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, E. E. Cummings, and the magazine Transition. They were born with the modern discovery of the Unconscious, an organ or entity for the mystification, obscuration, and sexualizing of all knowledge. They are each a variant of more or less talented cynic, nihilist, hedonist, associationist, naturalist, freudian, and dada-ist. The last is a very descriptive title. Our modernistic artist is determined to be as Unconscious as possible. And since Freud has had to go way back into childhood or further to uncover the causes of our delightfully interesting complexes, so the esoteric tries to go as deeply into his chaotic and underground beginnings as he can, so that he may approximate a naturalistic Method. This Method is to be born of the union of literature with the Unconscious. It resembles somewhat Dreiser's attempt to marry surface-detail to literature in order to produce Realism. But the "naturalist" way is much simpler, inasmuch as even surface-details have to be remembered, and are therefore a great brother to the Unconscious type of genius, who would rather let the Unconscious do all the work. Miss Stein may be taken as the prototype of the new school, since most of the others boastfully acknowledge their "great debt" to her for having taught them Method. Such are our credulous "intellectuals," that the editors of Transition say: whenever miss stein writes anything whatever we will take it and print it whenever and whenever we damn please, howsoever and bejesus—or words to that effect, or non-effect. And then the Stein goes into a trance, and the thing is done. The esoterics, who, by the way, have a sort of prejudice against arguing their cause, immediately talk about the "abstracting and exploiting of the word" performed by the eminent witch-doctor, like a laying-on-of-hands. This is why, when it refers to such delicate matters of esthetics, I don't mind being taken for a rank reactionary by the "enlightened" crowd, who have in Joyce and Stein merely a new Jesus and Virgin Mary of immaculate-conception capabilities. However, in regard to the necessity for a definite break with the past and a greater intimacy with life in letters, I find myself in substantial agreement with them. Indeed, it is my sincere belief that Transition is the most alive and important literary force in our transition civilization: it voices the beginnings of epical melodrama on earth, and is ready for great things. But the esoteric whose



delight it is to astound the yokelry, in Mencken fashion, is merely serving the cynical bourgeois "liberal" tradition; and plays the role of the opportunist in art.

To get the record straight, it should be clearly understood that James Joyce is a master artist, and Gertrude Stein an occasionally interesting one. Cummings, too, has a biting fine talent. It is the colloquial influence they exert, and the general "esotericizing" trend of their Method-over-literature that we find so odious.

## THE MILITANT INTELLECTUAL

In a recent number of the *American Magazine* S. S. Van Dine (Willard Huntington Wright) publishes an article: "I Used to be a High-Brow, but Look at me Now!" To my mind this is an event of the first magnitude and significance. This Wright was once a third-rate, muddle, but earnest art critic; he wrote a novel that was a poor piece of realism; and yet all this one could forgive, including the fact that he ends by writing detective stories under the secret shame of a nom-de-plume. But the kind of betrayal of the human mind which is embodied in the previously mentioned essay none of us can pass over without shuddering, vomiting or crying our rage out loud. I am willing to join any demonstration of shame and protest that is made in front of this man's house; I should like to see him driven out of the city.

It occurs to me that if the highbrows, the intellectuals and their cohorts were willing to come out into the open and assert aggressively that they were in favor of more intellect and less ignorance or superstition and were ready to fight for their beliefs, more honor would be attached to the epithet: *intellectual*.

MATTHEW JOSEPHSON.



Drawn by Gropper.

## Where The Best Sellers Go

Or, a study showing the amazement of three popular authors puffed up with royalties and press reviews, on finding themselves in the great American ashcan only six months after having "arrived."

# LITERATURE AND REVOLUTION

By ROBERT WOLF

Speaking for a constituency of one only, I think the time has come for the younger artists and writers to express themselves on this or other subjects not by manifestoes or proclamations, but actually by their work.

We, especially those of us who came to maturity at the time of the war and the Bolshevik revolution, live in a very difficult world. Working under a capitalist dictatorship, and in a civilization whose every value we loathe and repudiate, we must nevertheless write in English, from the watch-tower of our own particular situation, and either for the great audience of the cynical and complacent, or for the tiny minority in opposition that is so terribly preoccupied, harassed, and overworked.

I do not think myself that the art demanded at present by either Mr. Babbitt or shall we say Comrade Redstone is the type of art that will stand in fifty years as the perfect and complete record of our time, for to tell the truth the Communist movement in this country has no more use for a great artist than a regimental bugler has for a symphonic orchestral score. And I am not sure that even the rights of translation into all languages, including the Russian, would improve the situation very much. In other words, we were born into the middle of a hundred years war, and we may as well make the best of it. Or in still other words, like all artists of every time and place, we are confronted by the demand for commercial art. . . .

There are two ways of solving this problem, the way of Shakespeare, the hack-writer and revamp of old plays, who foisted Hamlet and Macbeth upon the Elizabethan public, and the way of Stendhal, the soldier and diplomat, who said in 1835 that he might be read in 1935.

For art, it seems to me, has other functions than those so admirably fulfilled by Mr. Sinclair Lewis, or Comrades Upton Sinclair and Henri Barbusse—to read along the spectrum from white to orange and red—(but vastly more efficiently by Comrade Bucharin); nor do I agree with John Dos Passos in the last number of the *Bookman*, who apologizes that a novelist is "a sort of truffle dog digging up raw material (for) the scientist, the anthropologist, or the historian. . . ."

Life (at best) as someone has said, is like a child's shirt, short and dirty. Love (at best) is an obscene scramble of birth-control and disillusion—as well as jealousy, exaltation, mother complexes, and gentlemen prefer blondes. Death is the joke at the end of every individual life, if not at that of the life of the race. . . .

Bolshevik Russia has not noticeably changed these facts, though it combines the bricks to build a different structure, and no revolution will alter them appreciably so far as I can observe. Nevertheless, life, love, revolution, even death—with all their inevitable accompaniments, from the first kiss down to the last exile of a trouble-maker—are all eminently worth while, and worth writing about.

It is the function of the artist, by externalizing this material, by facing it frankly (and you will notice that no one else's work ever does quite face it), to give man a temporary sense of reconciliation with his fate, as well as mastery over it, to enable him to enter with creative satisfaction into the patterns out of which life is built.

The artist is as much an outgrowth of his time, race, class, age, blood-pressure, digestion, childhood, education, and glands, as a finger is of a hand—his job is to clear the track and to let these powers express themselves. If they don't, no amount of high-handed monkeying with the time-tables is going to kid himself or anybody else about it, or bring the train thundering into the station one minute sooner than it can normally arrive.



*Drawn by Gropper.*

## **Where The Best Sellers Go**

*Or, a study showing the amazement of three popular authors puffed up with royalties and press reviews, on finding themselves in the great American ashcan only six months after having "arrived."*

# PROSPERITY: A HYMN [By H. H. LEWIS]

*Speed, speed, speed,  
Racket and rush and strife.  
Faster for profiteering greed,  
Louder above the workers' need,  
Clangs the mill of life.*

*Hurry, hurry, hurry . . .  
Rent for the crowded flat,  
Milk for the babes that bawl.  
But where do we get by that  
And what's the use of it all?*

*Pick, put, bang.  
Step on it!  
This is the piece-work age,  
And men like madmen hustle.  
Pep it up!  
This is the top and final stage  
Of servile mind and muscle!*

*Faster and faster  
Comes the conveyor-belt;  
Accordingly faster  
The blows by labor are dealt;  
For yonder the bloated master,  
So heavy he's doomed to fall,  
Pulls up on the rheostat.  
But where do we get by that  
And what's the use of it all?*

*It's speed, speed, speed—  
When you have the work to speed with;  
It's drag, drag, drag .  
When you have no boss to plead with.  
Inside the mill of life  
It's hurry, hurry, hurry,  
For you have a machine to tend to;  
Outside the mill of strife  
It's damn slow, rot and worry,  
For you have no boss to bend to.  
The mill of life is humming  
With a thousand new machines,  
And that's why you are bumming  
For a bowl of beans.*

*Prowl, prowl, prowl . . .  
I'm hungry, I want a job,  
I MUST have something to do.  
"Sergeant, disperse the mob!"  
Almost too bad to be true.*

*Beg, beg, beg . . .  
I served my country in France;  
I killed ten Huns;  
Now I get duns,  
And no one gives me a chance.  
I want work!"  
"Get out!"  
"Move on!"  
Oh hell, there's holes in my pants!*

*Machinery,  
Efficiency—  
"Prosperity,"  
Cal's ditty flops awful flat  
In spite of his stovepipe hat,  
For Hunger cries from the wall:  
"Where do I get by that  
And what's the use of it all?"  
Plod, plod, plod*

*On damn thin slices of leather!  
We curse the hardness of stone,  
We whine against the weather—  
We millions now plodding alone.  
Who should be marching together.*

*Plod, plod, plod,  
Plod, plod . . . march,  
March! from the crowded flat  
With the wives and babes that bawl.  
And what would we get by that?  
Machinery,  
Efficiency,  
Prosperity—  
All!*

## MIDDLE AGED MEDDLERS

By John Herrmann

The stink is caused by ignorance. And also by the desire to be in on things. But being about ten miles behind with blinders facing forward they stick out their golf grown vests and let their socks drag out behind them. And I have heard them say and to me to others also that distinctly what they cannot understand or do not care to understand is "on the wrong track entirely, Gee whizz, just wasting themselves, those kids, and they're bright kids too."

It is no use hating them, in fact you cannot really hate them anymore than you can hate a weasel.

I am talking almost entirely now about some of the well known older, staid, better and very reliable older writers who are still churning for the benefit of first edition collectors and club women and young boys in high school and in college. There was a grain of promise in every one of them once and some of them have realized all the promise they ever had so they write the same book every time with a different setting and characters and wish they were a little more commercial so they could make the post and the movies.

And it is my belief that these guys, scared of their skins, would like to see every evidence of young writers and their writings pock marked first and then used like the average Sears Roebuck yearbook.

For the benefit of many constituents who look to every word I write as gospel, who read mark learn and inwardly digest them wholesale, my public says I, I say to them talking for myself, you understand.

There is the GOOD and the BAD and to hell with any other way of putting it.

I see it this way sometimes. If it is true that wisdom is in the young and the old only and the trips in middle age have lost their young wisdom and not attained their old wisdom. What then. You can depend on the young fellows, if they have independence. (There are ten in . . . . .) Or the old. (I know three.) Out of 100,000,000, how many are there not counting the women and little children.

I do not believe that we should entirely lay aside Shakespeare. But Murray Godwin doesn't have to matter. Now he doesn't. Some day soon though, when he gets the well-known ballyhoo and reviewers find no one with whom to compare him, then he'll have to matter. Extremes are common. First the gentle patronizing and last the well known we'll let him live and he'll kill himself by making a fool of himself.

Every writer who has anything good in him or ever seemed to have anything good in him had a little trouble making his point. When the smug years set in with an audience and a guaranteed sale in advance on any book he wrote. HE HAD TO for his own protection decide that he had reached the pinnacle.

On the other hand, speaking at large.

The few who are saved from an attitude which I resent being still what I am saved because they are not so sure that they are right (granting they are) and they want to know if any other way is *righter*. A sympathetic curiosity saves a few.

But on the whole you will find that my remarks this evening have been decidedly hitting the nail on the head or vice versa and in conclusion the only way the young fellows get any place today if they are writing is with other young ones or a few (THREE) old ones. But modern is not a word any more than realistic, super, romantic, classic, bunk, sentimental, hot dog or ethereal. Just good or bad, I thank you.

# BOOKS

## REVIEWED BY:

Joseph Freeman

Chas. Yale Harrison

Solon R. Barber

Sally Greene

Robert W. Dunn

Michael Gold

William Edge

Irving T. Marsh

Bernard Smith

Upton Sinclair

Henry Flury

Lionel Leffert

*The Twilight of the American Mind*, by Walter B. Pitkin. Simon & Schuster. \$3.50.

The plight of the American intelligentsia, steadily pressed into standardized beings by American super-industrialization, is bewailed by Prof. Walter B. Pitkin, of Columbia University. Prof. Pitkin points out that the "whole modern trend in industrialism is toward higher and more efficient organization, in which the relative number of superior intelligences must steadily dwindle."

According to Prof. Pitkin, the population of the United States contains about one per cent "best minds." His conception of a "best mind" is based on the intelligence tests used by psychologists for the army and widely applied in the universities. His evidence consists almost entirely of the results of this test in the Columbia University school of journalism, where he teaches. Nevertheless, much of what he says is generally true of the intelligentsia's status in the American social structure.

In essence, Prof. Pitkin's thesis is that the American universities turn out an increasing number of intellectuals who can find no place in the industrial scheme because modern organization and technique is constantly reducing the need for intellectuals. Prof. Pitkin's manner of putting it is, that there is today nothing in the United States which a "second rate" mind cannot do. His chief concern, naturally, is not about the second rate or third rate intellectuals, but about the best minds; he is spokesman for the intellectual "aristocracy"; but he incidentally throws some light on the position of the ordinary intellectuals who have no pretensions to originality or profundity of thought. These find themselves robotized in an industrial system which requires from all but a few executives and scientists the maximum of routine and the minimum of initiative.

Enumerating the various professions which are becoming either over-crowded, or obsolete as far as "best minds" are concerned, Prof. Pitkin says that the church no longer offers a place for the more intelligent and able intellectuals. At one time, the clergy was the leading intellectual element in American life. This was before the industrialization of the United States, when the church and theology were the center of American intellectual life. Prof. Pitkin ascribes the closing of the church to the "best minds" to the fact that the church requires a man to be dogmatic, and no "best mind" can be dogmatic. However, more important than the church's dogma, though that is reactionary enough, is the fact that ministers are badly paid, and, of course, no "best mind" will consider himself adequately recognized unless highly paid.

Journalism, that old refuge of the intellectual without a post, is also not what it used to be. Like other "basic industries" it is highly organized and concentrated.

"There is no future," Prof. Pitkin says, "for many best minds in journalism. Each large newspaper can use to advantage three or four men who are in the Upper One Per Cent of our intelligence classes. This means not more than 4,000 or 5,000 such men and women of this high grade. Besides, Prof. Pitkin asserts, very few best minds are to be found in American journalism. Thus, among the students of the Columbia School of Journalism whose work and psychological tests show that they have medium intelligence, few remain in newspaper work; those who indicate superior intelligence advance to the more lucrative and important po-

sitions, either in newspaper work or in closely related fields (publicity, advertising, etc.); but those whose records indicate the very highest intelligence and versatility quickly leave journalism for other fields. In this connection, too, it should be pointed out that journalism, relatively speaking, is not one of the highly paid professions in the United States. The average journalist, working even for New York City newspapers, can count on \$35 to \$75 a week; that is, the wage of a skilled railway worker or mechanic; and in America, where a man's intellect is measured by his income, such a prospect is hardly attractive to a "best mind" of the very "highest order of intelligence."

What happens to the "best minds" of America? Being himself a university professor, Prof. Pitkin naturally finds that the most intelligent of the intelligentsia become university professors; others become statisticians, practitioners of special branches of the law, book publishers, owners and managers of corporations, economists, and independent publicists unattached to any publication. Best Minds of a slightly lower grade enter publicity, advertising, banking, brokerage and manufacturing.

While Prof. Pitkin's approach is that of a typical intellectual, it can be said that many of the students turned out by the universities and scientific schools find, on graduation, that the industrial system presents little opportunity for the exercise of the "free intelligence." There is in New York, for example, a large laboratory housing 3,000 scientific workers employed by a telephone and telegraph company. The 3,000 scientists and research workers spend their entire working time on inventions and improvements. Their work is theoretical; but only a few out of the entire 3,000 do any original work. The others work on an intellectual plane very much like the Ford workers work on "the belt." Thus a young man who has studied mathematics and physics and taught several years at the university will be employed for eight hours a day solving mathematical problems. He does not know what his solutions will be used for. Some of his work will go to one department, some to another. There his answers will be used in working out an invention or an improvement in telephone or telegraph apparatus, perhaps on the new television instruments. The young intellectual robot never sees the actual laboratory work, and does not know what is going on, even less than a Ford worker who spends eight hours a day turning one screw. Many of the young scientists in the telephone and telegraph company's laboratory receive \$40 a week for their machine-like labor—again the wage of a skilled A. F. of L. worker. These are the employed intellectuals. We must add to these thousands of young intellectuals who cannot find a place in their chosen professions. This is true not only of trained scientists who are thrown back on teaching, but of trained teachers, of whom there is at present a great "over-production."

While the mediocre intellectual is thus often a hired laborer, he does not look upon himself as such, and considers himself quite a superior person as compared with the worker. At one time the class-conscious workers of America coined the term "white-collar slave" to designate with contempt office workers who looked down on manual workers; this term can now be applied even to higher strata of the intelligentsia. Because the university training of the intellectual steepens him in an imaginary world of great dreams, where he is a co-worker with Newton, Einstein, Shakespeare and



whatnot, the industrial world in which he must eventually take his place comes to him as a shock after the purely literary world in which he spent his student years. Often, too, the young intellectual is drawn from petit-bourgeois families, whom the super-industrialization of the country and the concentration of production is steadily pressing to the wall. Often he comes from the farm, to the poverty of which he does not want to return after the "grandeur" of the university or the large city. This state of affairs breeds a certain amount of dissatisfaction in him, and probably accounts for the popularity among the intelligentsia of such authors as Sherwood Anderson, Eugene O'Neill, Cabell, and others, who in one way or another express a resentment against the machine age which makes the "free exercise of the intelligence" so impossible once the intellectual gets his college diploma and steps out into the real world.

JOSEPH FREEMAN.

## PAX AMERICANA

*Conquest, America's Painless Imperialism, by John Carter. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.50.*

Mr. John Carter punches the clock in one of the offices of the State Department at Washington. On dull days, when the Anti-Imperialist League is not demonstrating outside his window, he has been busy writing. He has composed some twenty-two chapters of what he calls "speculative interpretation" on United States' foreign affairs. It purports to show what a pleasant, painless and beneficent thing American imperialism is. These chapters are filled for the most part with mouth-filling diplomatic phrases, and many confusingly presented facts, the net result signifying nothing, proving hardly anything, pointing in all directions but generally nowhere in particular.

Still, it is just the sort of book General Herbert Hoover should have taken along on his battleship excursion to South America. Latin diplomats and after-dinner speakers like grandiloquent strings of words embodying hazy political concepts. Such a book could have been left behind to set at rest any misgivings there might be that the Hoover pilgrimage meant anything more than an innocent social call of one businessman on another. It shows the United States spreading over five continents, scattering dollar investments and plenteous exports—all for the love of humanity, the peace of the world and the welfare and security of the backward peoples. This is capitalist imperialism à la Carter. No conquests, no annexation, no bloodshed—well, hardly ever.

"We" are a sweetness and light kind of empire, you see, quite different from the naughty empires of Europe. However, in an off guard movement Mr. Carter will admit "our private financial dictators have ruled in Hungary, Poland, Persia and Germany, as they rule today in Haiti, Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Ecuador." "We" try to be as easy as we can on native sovereignties, but our bankers know what they want and they always get it. It's all for the good of the world and the ignorant Nicaraguans or Colombians. In some places "we" may have to thrust a customs-collector or a loan contract down an unwilling throat. And if native rulers resist or disagree among themselves we may have to hold a "fair and free election," permit only those candidates and parties to participate who approve our policies, and hunt down as "bandits" those who question the purity of our motives. All this Mr. Carter heartily approves, but he manages to omit references to the more forcible and sanguinary steps in the process. He sees only the sure and secure results, and tries to make his unsophisticated readers believe that it all comes about through "legitimate" trade and other ways that are thoroughly innocent-appearing and "non-aggressive."

Chapter 14 alone is worthwhile for reference purposes. It is a collection showing how 45 American corporations have branches and subsidiaries abroad. It is all very well to know that Wrigley now manufactures Double Mint in London and that General Motors has natives working on a local "belt" in a Kobe or San Paulo assembly plant. What all this means Carter is unable to say except that Wall Street is gradually buying up the world, and hence is spreading peace, plenty and freedom.

For an economic and political interpretation of all this the reader is referred again to *Dollar Diplomacy* by Nearing and Freeman. The real significance of American capitalism's sweep abroad is found there and not in the rambling, cloudy pages of the State Department agent.

ROBERT W. DUNN.

## OFFERING NO SOLUTION

*Prisoners All, by Oskar Maria Graf. Translated by Margaret Green. Alfred A. Knopf. \$4.00.*

This is the true story of 14 years of the life of a South German artist (written by the artist himself), which, through its peculiarly human contacts, has roots in the minds of all peoples. It is a rather sketchy addition to the literature interpreting conditions in South Germany during the war and the revolution after the war. In this light, it is also an addition to what has been written on Why Revolutions Fail. It is, finally, a comprehensive and searching investigation into the mind of an artist and a radical. *Prisoners All* is not only one of the most brilliant biographies of this Decade; it is also a life story comparable to Rousseau's *Confessions* and Barbellion's *Journal of a Disappointed Man* and an important newcomer to the company of genuine life confessions.

The story is simple, cruel, strong, and bitter. It does not make pleasant light reading; it makes painful reading. It is the case history of a man who rebelled.

Oskar Maria Graf (the author) introduces his yarn with these words:

"It is the aim of this book to be no more than a human document of the times."

His recountal covers the years from 1905, when he was eleven years old, to 1919, when he was twenty-five.

Graf was born, the son of a baker, in a small South German town. He wanted to be an inventor, a veterinary surgeon, then an author. So he ran away from home, went to Munich, and set up as an author. He had the word, "author," printed neatly on his visiting cards. But his stuff did not sell. His money gave out; he used up money intrusted to him by his brother; and was finally forced to take a job as baker's apprentice.

He got acquainted with a group of local anarchists—lived the night life in the Munich restaurants—got fed up with baker-apprentice slavery—and finally went to a colony of radicals in Switzerland where he met Kropotkin and others, but made little impression. So he tired of this and returned to Germany and the bakeshops again.

All this time, he was writing verse, reviews, tracts, articles, and jokes for the funny papers. His work sold poorly.

When the war broke out, Graf said:

"This bores me, you know! If they want me, they'll fetch me. I'm not going to run after them." An hour or two later he volunteered.

He did not fit into the war machine. He was a rotten soldier. He disobeyed orders—wrote verses on the walls of his prison cells—went on a hunger strike. Finally, the machine spewed him out, on the ground that he was too insane to make a good soldier.

After a few weeks in an asylum (described with great power and vividness), he returned to Munich and took up writing again. Some of his reviews were printed. He was given a scholarship to write a play in verse, but found the university a bore, and failed to please with the play. He joined the radicals again, but divided his time between writing, speech-making, organizing for the revolution and working as an agent for a dealer in contraband food, wine, soap, and perfume. He spent his nights and days drinking and eating with the contraband dealer and his wife. He got married and left his wife. He took part in the Communist revolution and was imprisoned when this failed. His book ends on the note of his love for a certain "dark girl."

He writes near the end of the book: "Through many shocks and convulsions I had attained insight, partial or complete." That sentence stands. In all his youth, Graf was sending out feelers. His story shows all the traits of the unsure, neurotic personality. Here is an artist who parroted the slogans, the art-words, of the many groups he knew and who found himself only when he told the story of himself. This book is not fiction. It is the true story of a sensitive man who was caught up in the maws of the system and who tried to grope his way out. But this book is not groping. It is the book of many lives, a cross-section of a Man-type. It points no moral. What is there, is there. It offers no solution for anything. But in the writing of it, this "intellectual" who never knew what he was about in living, found release, assurance, and force in telling the story of that living. In this act of release, Graf has achieved heroic artistic stature. He has succeeded.

SOLON R. BARBER.

# [[ WAR AND WHITE TERROR ]]

By CHARLES YALE HARRISON

With the world sweeping headlong into another imperialistic war; with all the agencies which tend to create so-called public opinion fostering a mass-psychology here in America, there is naturally a demand for "war" stories of the flamboyant, Hun-killing type. Magazines with enormous circulations like the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Liberty*, *Colliers* and others do not allow a week to pass but that the heroic (?) exploits of some "doughboy" or "leatherneck" are told to the tune of some five thousand words and illustrated by lurid, smoke-wreathed drawings. Novels which condemn war from the pacifist viewpoint, too, are given wide publicity and exploitation, for the makers of war have long since learned that in the last analysis, pacifism is simply the other face of imperialism. And so by means of the printed word (*Chevrons*, *Squad*, etc.), the stage, the movies (*The Big Parade*, *Wings*, etc.) this subtle and grim preparation of the American masses for the next holocaust goes its deadly way.

Out of this welter of jazzy war fiction Henri Barbusse's latest book\* stands almost alone with its stark tales of butchery, torture and official crime. Consisting of twenty-five short stories, the book is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the horrible experiences of the author during his service in the French Army during the last war, the second part tells of the barbarism of the White Terror in Germany, the Balkans and Russia. The third part consists of miscellaneous stories. Many of these tales recite in a few pages incidents of torture and horror that will make them classics in the field of macabre literature. The war

stories like *The Dastard Train* and *Dead Alive* rank with the best in war writings.

The book makes its appearance at a fitting time. But a few weeks ago Field Marshall Sir William Robertson said that war is imminent between England and America. Soon the drums will play their ghastly tattoo, soon the flags will be waving and all the machinery to drive workers on to the battlefield to slaughter one another will be in full operation. Barbusse makes it quite clear that the frightfulness which general staffs direct against "enemy" armies are soon turned, in the guise of a White terror against the war-weary and revolutionary workingclass.

Barbusse's stories about the White Terror in Rumania are so terrifying in subject-matter that I found myself reading these stories horror-stricken and with my lips tightly compressed. In the tale called *The Worst Torture of All*, the author describes some of the agonies which revolutionists must be prepared to face in Motherly Marie's domain. "Chains riveted to one's body; the Cage, they shove you in standing upright. But a clock can at least swing its pendulum, while you can't so much as stir a finger and you're wedged inside like a wooden soldier standing to arms. It's a cell and a straitjacket too, a coffin and a cuirass." And then later: "The *Gherla*, my boy! A hole hollowed out in the rock. If you were to stand up your head and shoulders would be sticking out . . . you must squat inside like a toad. So they make you fast, press you, forge you with chains fixed to the sides until you block up the hole nicely." But the *Gherla* is not the worst agony. The list of tortures follow in merciless profusion like a madman's litany; such horror could only be conceived in an insane brain.

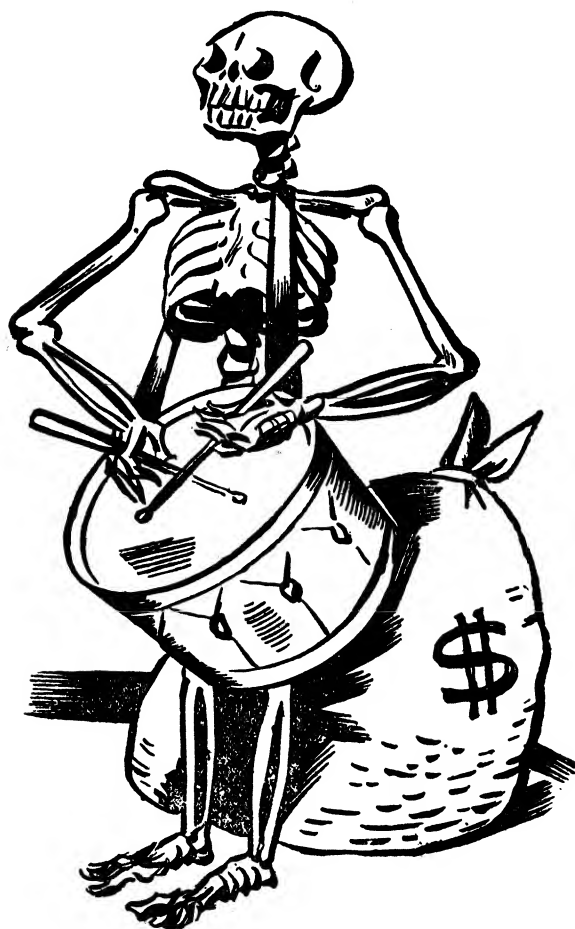
Read the book, as I have done, and sit in amazement and wonder how it is possible that the brain of man can devise these tortures which the masters in Rumania inflict upon their workers. But these are true stories. Actual names and dates and places pepper the book.

In his dedication Barbusse writes: "My hope is that these casual jottings, picked up here and there in our appalling present-day civilization, may accustom a few readers to the strangeness of truth, and open the eyes of a public opinion lulled by childish legends to the true picture of our Twentieth Century—a century that may be described as the Age of Gold, of Steel, of the Jazz Band, but above all, as the Age of Blood."

Later on he says again: "There is far more cruelty and plundering in this great world of ours than mediocre public intelligence can reckon. Far more murderers too, though we only point out the most honored and renowned. The barbarity which falls from high places is both present and active, everywhere."

These stories tell of terror in Europe. We here in America have our own blood-stained stories of class-horror which some day must be told by a pen as masterly as Barbusse's. Joe Hill, Frank Little, Wesley Everett, —.

\*I Saw It Myself. Henri Barbusse. E. P. Dutton & Co. \$2.50.



## The Dough Boy

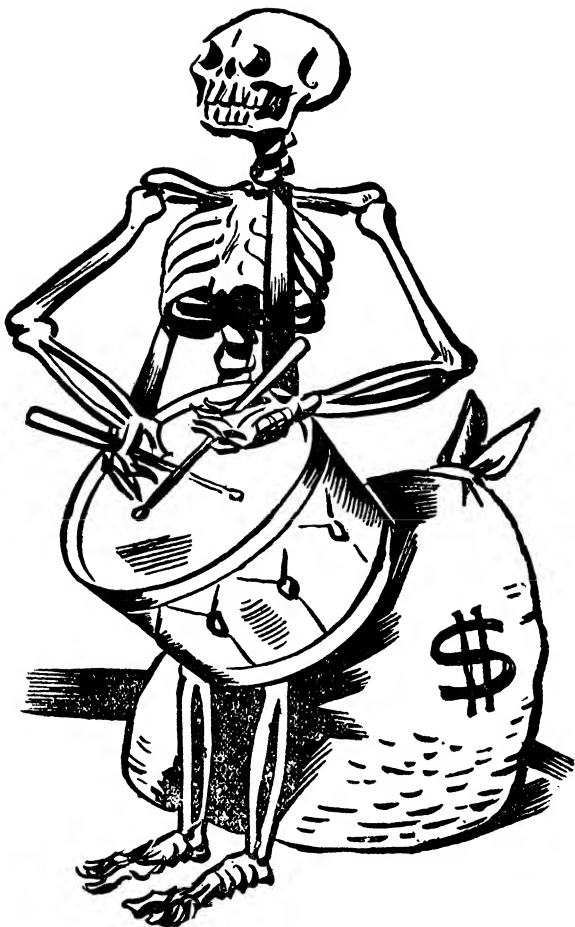
The war drums sound again. Soon new millions will be sacrificed on the altars of American money. War threatens with England, South America, Soviet Russia, China and other places. It will come in the next decade, as surely as the last one. Anyone who can't believe this belongs in a Christian Science kindergarten.

*Lute and Scimitar, Poems and Ballads of Central Asia*, translated by Achmed Abdullah, with a preface by Hervey Allen. Payson & Clarke. \$2.50.

Primitive peoples, the introduction to this collection of Asiatic poetry claims, sing only of love and war. Certainly the poems in this volume sing of nothing else, and its title is therefore appropriate. While to the western ear many of the ballads are naive and much of the rhythm monotonous, there are a number of beautiful pieces in the book, several of them being folk-poems and others the creations of professional poets. On the whole, however, the poems are so fragile, so thinly spun, that one wonders if these are really representative of the Central Asiatic muse.

B. S.

Buy your books through the NEW MASSES.  
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## **The Dough Boy**

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# THE ILLOGICAL LOGICIAN

By BERNARD SMITH

If I were asked to name the two people I should like to have sitting next to me at a dinner party I should probably choose Gloria Swanson and Bertrand Russell. Mr. Russell is personally a very charming man; his gentlemanly courtesy, his impeccable manners and his poise make him the perfect dinner companion.

The pleasing personality of Mr. Russell finds expression in his ethical concepts. He hates war and bloodshed; he deplores poverty; he believes in the more humane practices in social life; he praises the contemplative existence, the worship of art and the dedication of the individual to making a humdrum world more pleasant. While I am convinced that his "system" of morals has no practical worth and that it is probably an obstacle to any concrete reformation of our society, I can only admire the divine sweetness of this gentle philosophic soul.

For his active participation in contemporary thought I have not the same admiration. Mr. Russell, it will be remembered, was an academic logician twenty years ago, and his *Principia Mathematica* and *The Philosophy of Leibnitz* won him extravagant praise for the brilliance with which he treated scholarly problems. The War caused Mr. Russell to undergo a peculiar metamorphosis. While other scholars buried themselves deeper in their sterile tomes to hide themselves the more from the turmoil of reality, he deserted the cloister and entered the arena of social discussion. The act was in itself altogether praiseworthy, but its consequences were disastrous. If any one man exemplifies the ridiculous confusion of the liberal mind, it is Bertrand Russell. His latest volume, *Sceptical Essays*, may justly be considered representative of his ideas, and one seldom sees a book so hopelessly muddled, so weak in argument and so impossible for practical application as this one.

I don't think much more will be needed for an evaluation of *Sceptical Essays* than a number of key quotations. In an essay entitled "Can Men Be Rational?" Mr. Russell remarks: "To preach an altruistic morality appears to me somewhat useless, because it will appeal only to those who already have altruistic desires. But to preach rationality is somewhat different, since rationality helps us to realize our own desires on the whole whatever they may be." His view is based on the conviction that enlightened self-interest is at the same time beneficial to the rest of society. If this is not an altruistic morality I don't know what it is. If the self-interest of the individual corresponds to the self-interest of his neighbors in our competitive economy, then the nature of competition has been misunderstood by everybody but Bertrand Russell. For a logician, his argument is pretty poor stuff.

His essay on "Machines and the Emotions" includes the opinion that the popular demand for war in England, Germany and the United States must have had an "instinctive basis." His very next statement is that the "modern increase in warlike instinct is attributable to the dissatisfaction (mostly unconscious) caused by the regularity, monotony and tameness of modern life." These qualities of modern life he believes to have been caused by the machine. Here is very obviously a discrepancy. A desire for war cannot be an instinct and yet be the result of "modern life." What Mr. Russell is saying is that militancy is at once inherited and acquired, which is a confusion on the part of Mr. Russell.

He compares Karl Marx's *Capital* with Sir Arthur Salter's *Allied Shipping Control*, to the disadvantage of Marx, which is at least original. With exquisite reasoning he points that while Marx proved that "under capitalism wage-earners have suffered terrible privations," Marx forgot to prove that they would suffer less under Communism. The conclusion to be derived, evidently, is that we had better not advocate doing away with capitalism until we prove by accepted Aristotelian methods that collectivism would be better. Of course, Mr. Russell doesn't mean that, but it again illustrates his confusion.

"Given men and women who do not desire the things which can only be secured through the misfortunes of others, the obstacles to social freedom will be at an end," says the author. This is obviously true. He also says that education will give us those beau-

tiful men and women. This seems to be true too. But how will he undertake to educate people to his ideal unless he controls the educational system? And how does he propose to get hold of the schools? He fails to say. Does he suppose that the oligarchy will turn them over to him?

It is impossible in a review to take up his statements in detail, but there is one more that deserves attention. Mr. Russell's argument against the economic interpretation of history is that it fails to take into account the fact that "the groupings that are consonant with human instinct are biological," not economic. His examples of biological as against economic groupings are the family and the nation. Not much comment is needed. Practically every important sociologist and anthropologist today says that the family and the nation are economic or material groupings, but Mr. Russell cheerfully ignores the very science that he elsewhere eulogizes in order to spare himself the trouble of revising his divine morality. In an essay entitled "Philosophy in the Twentieth Century," he says that new discoveries in mathematics threatened to demolish the systems of the metaphysicians, but the "philosophers met the situation by not reading" the new mathematicians. His own private school of philosophy, he says, assimilated the new mathematics, "and thereby won an easy argumentative victory over the partisans of continued ignorance." I should like to add the following statement: "New discoveries in the social sciences threatened to demolish the absurd ethical notions of Mr. Bertrand Russell, but he met the situation by ignoring the sociologists concerned. As a partisan of continued ignorance, he can easily be conquered in an argument by anyone who assimilates the new social research."

There is only one thing more to say. The title of this book is *Sceptical Essays*, but just exactly how much scepticism does the author advocate? In his introduction he confesses that he is opposed to "heroic scepticism," which means that he is opposed to anyone who wants to be consistent. He always approves the "middle-road," which means that he is afraid to accept the consequences of his own reasoning. In short, Mr. Russell's scepticism is a tool which enables him to accept whole-heartedly what pleases him and to be sceptical about what doesn't quite coincide with the comfortable bourgeois idealism he acquired from his environment. It is extremely advisable that Mr. Russell go back to mathematics, where he was a world-figure, and where at least he could do no harm.

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## THE BANKRUPTCY OF MARRIAGE

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V. F. Calverton,  
Baltimore, Md.

My Dear Calverton:

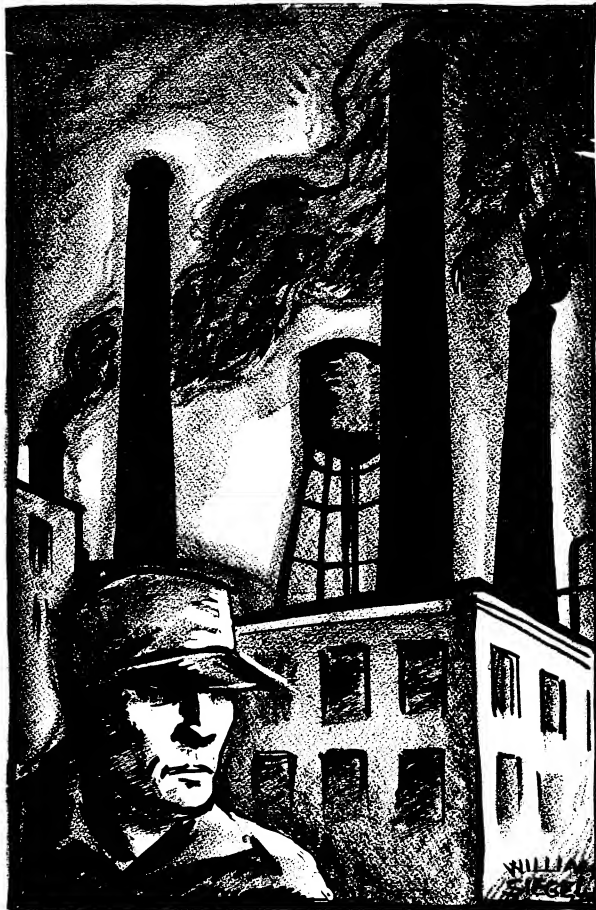
I thank you for sending me your book, which contains much useful and interesting information. But it seems to me that you are too well supplied with destructive criticism of marriage and not sufficiently supplied with constructive. The pendulum swings one way and then it swings back again. When human beings have all the license they want, then they will discover that they are in desperate need of self-control—that is, assuming that they are ever to think about anything but sex.

In my opinion there is no greater delusion than the idea that sexual obsession is entirely the result of repression. I have known all my life, and watched persons who took to themselves complete liberty, and they have sometimes been the most completely obsessed and completely miserable and useless human beings I have ever known.

The matter seems to me to be covered by Nietzsche's saying, "I pity the lovers who have nothing but their love." That is why I still remain what is called a Puritan—but not Puritan enough for Boston.

Sincerely,  
UPTON SINCLAIR.





Drawn by Wm. Siegel

### Decaying Beauty

*Point Counter Point*, by Aldous Huxley. Doubleday, Doran. \$2.50.

*Point Counter Point* is beautifully written, erudite, "artistic," but the atmosphere it creates is sickly and smelling of decay.

Again Aldous Huxley deals with the post-war generation. Here the milieu is that of an upper-leisure class too easily given to adulteries and sensual pleasures. The young people he writes about are cynical and helpless and hopeless. Their lives are meaningless, jaded and without purpose. Indeed, their occupations, like their pleasures, are too superficial to require much attention.

The characters, although by no means intentional on the part of the author, are heavy indictments against the society which breeds and nurtures them. When they have eaten and are well spirited with booze they feel the futility of their lives, only to suggest a salvation they cannot embrace. Utter desolation and waste.

We wish Mr. Huxley would spend less time in his laboratory and more in the midst of people who have something to live for, and for whom the conscious dedication to a social ideal transcends any purely personal and egocentric existence.

SALLY GREENE.

### RELIGION AND SCIENCE

*The Scientific World View*, by William Kay Wallace, Macmillan. \$3.00.

Mr. Wallace has written a volume of good-natured bromides in an attempt to state the case of Science vs. Religion. The reviewer, seeking in vain for a definition of the latter, was forced to conclude that the author refers specifically to the Christian religion, and not to an abstract religious concept.

Wallace lays entirely too much stress on the influence of religion on history. He is in a great sweat to make a religion of science. His thesis here, while more fully documented, still clings to the surface of things, blandly citing the changes affected in history through the development of scientific technique.

The volume should thus boil itself down to the bare statement that our future economy requires a more careful analysis of feeling and the springs of action. This is indeed necessary, but why take over three hundred pages to say so?

LIONEL LEFFERT.

## THE ORIGINAL BABBITT

*Democracy and Leadership*, by Irving Babbitt. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.00.

I have often wondered where Sinclair Lewis found the original prototype for his Babbitt. By accident, I discovered that the original is still living and writing, now contributing to the *Forum* magazine. As one would naturally expect, he is found in Sacco and Vanzetti's far famed Massachusetts, yea, even in Lowell's Haav-aad university. He is very respectable and cultured, quite superficial and supercilious, as he dips his stylish plume pen into perfumed rose tinted ink and makes gracious flourishes with his lily-white hands.

A third impression of a book, *Democracy and Leadership* by the Harvard professor of literature, is not to be sneezed at, even if the first two impressions were purposely or cautiously small. The first impression came out in 1924, but the modest author, acting according to the dictates of "decorum" concealed the fact as best he could. But the winds of modern skepticism and radicalism are beginning to "get the professor's goat" and he is now hitting the magazines. If one can still relish the Mid-Victorians, he can relish the original Babbitt.

In making his delicate analyses in Chap. 6 on "True and False Liberals" Babbitt says sagely: "The choice to which the modern man will finally be reduced, it has been said, is that of being a Bolshevik or a Jesuit." Why not make the choice, professor, of being an idiot or an intelligent individual? Another gem is this (p. 193): "The extreme Marxian not only takes a purely quantitative view of work, so much so that he tends, as has been said, to put the work of a Raphael and that of a common sign painter on the same level, but in evaluating the product of work he aims to eliminate the competitive element. Recent Marxians have come to take a somewhat less quantitative view of work (the five day week, professor?), but the fallacies that result from a total or partial suppression of competition are built into the very foundations of socialism." Another gem (p. 193): "The fallacies involved in a purely quantitative definition of work are almost too gross (how revolting to a Haav-aad man!) to need refuting. As Mencius (who goes back before even the Pre-Victorian era) remarked long ago (several centuries), it is both proper and inevitable that a man who works with his mind should hold sway over the man who works only with his hands. As a result of the concentrated mental effort of the gifted few (the Oil or Power gang?) an effort displayed either in invention or else in organization and management, the common laborer may today enjoy comforts that were out of reach even of the opulent only two or three generations ago. If the laborer wishes to add to these comforts or even to keep them, he should not listen to the agitator who seeks to stir up his envy of every form of superiority."

The original Babbitt hits the nail on the head when he says: (p. 200) "We are in fact, as some one remarked, living in the Middle Ages; inasmuch as the meddling is itself only an outcome of our confused definition of justice, the cynic might suggest, as an even more correct description of the time, the Muddle Ages." Quite so, professor, and you are the most muddled of them all in your bourgeois, anti-labor metaphysics. But now to the Babbittian remedy (Thank heaven there is a remedy!): (p. 205) "The remedy for the evils of competition is found in the moderation and magnanimity of the strong and the successful, and not in any sickly sentimentalizing over the lot of the underdog. The mood of unrest and insurgency is so rife today as to suggest that our leaders, instead of thus controlling themselves, are guilty of an extreme psychic unrestraint." These are harsh words, doctor, for a Haav-aad man. Are you not carried away with the heat of passion?

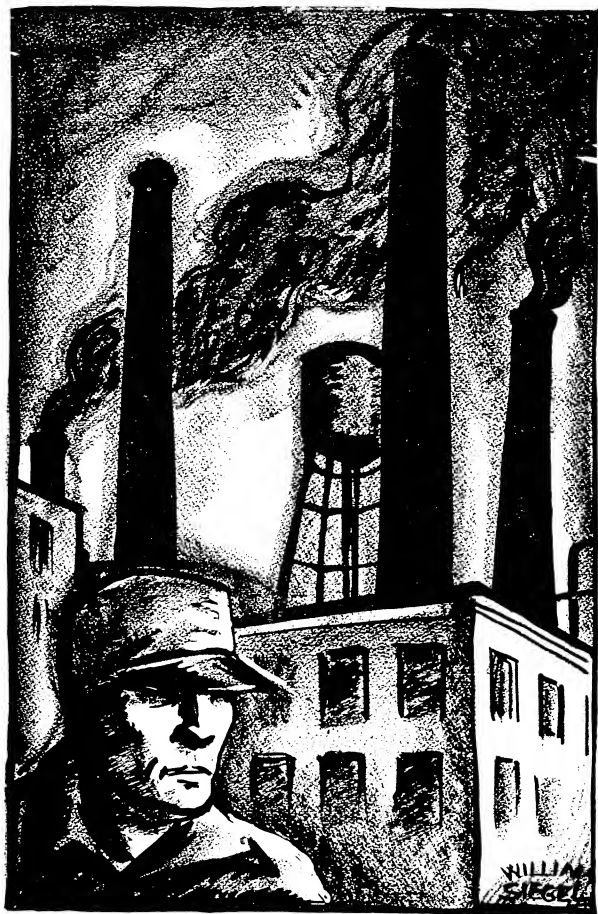
By publishing this book, and the others, and by his magazine articles, Irving Babbitt is revealing to the public what is wrong with our colleges. If he has ever had any contact with the sciences, it fails to find social expression. He is true to himself—Babbitt.

HENRY FLURY.

\* \* \* \*

Bishop William Montgomery Brown has just published *The Bankruptcy of Christian Supernaturalism*, an exposition of Bishop Brown's views on fundamentalism and dogma.

**JANUARY, 1929**



*Drawn by Wm. Siegel*

# [[ THE WORK OF A MAN ]]

By MICHAEL GOLD

Somewhere, in the author's heaven, perhaps, where "justice" and a true table of values prevail, it is surely recognized that C. E. S. Wood is of more significance to American life than a gross of Al Smiths or Cal Coolidges. I know that he is to me.

*Heavenly Discourse* is a collection of those witty and diamond-point dialogues on life, theology, class war, Puritanism and American cussedness in general which appeared over a period of ten years in the old and new *Masses*.

No one who has read a single specimen of these Voltairean reports of the conversation that goes on between God, Billy Sunday, Jesus, Voltaire, William Jennings Bryan, Plato, and other famous citizens of the Bible heaven, can lose the impression they cut on the mind.

In our shopkeeper's America, the grand manner has been lost in writing. The mole's eye-view of the universe prevails. A gray "realism" hangs like a London fog over our younger writers. America has defeated them, they are too depressed to wield the bow of Ulysses. The epic is dead, except for such pretty postcard imitations of it as Benet's logrolled "John Brown." But Colonel Wood has never had any logrolling, and he has never followed the literary fashions. He writes in the large, glorious, free style of that period which Lewis Mumford has named the "Golden Day" in American thought. He is not derivative; he does not imitate; he wakes no echoes of the past. He lives in the present; he writes of white-hot current events; and yet I can never get over the feeling that here is Thoreau or Walt Whitman in the flesh, calmly judging our day.

This is something that cannot be learned in any university, nor can it be imitated. It is the fruit of a life. A man must have lived greatly and generously to be able to put characters like Rabelais, Mark Twain, Jesus, Sacco and Vanzetti, Spartacus and Garrison on a cosmic stage, and give them lines to speak that are not literary, trivial, pompous, or vain. You get a notion the writer of *Heavenly Discourse* lives on the plane of the great rebels, and because of this can write so intimately and truthfully their speech.

The large epic view is in this book, and there is real wit. This is not the "wisecracking" of the Broadway rounder, but philosophic wit that makes the heart smile, the mind think, and the blood surge with pity and anger.

Col. Wood is 75 years old. You would not know it reading his *Heavenly Discourse* or his major poem, "The Poet, in the Desert." His writings are fresh with the emotions of rebellious youth. He is never cynical; he is never world-weary; he is never callous to the world's pain, like so many of our modern writers, who have created the "hard-boiled" myth. Their philosophy of strength is based on the canon of the underworld; they think that by killing all social feeling, all generosity and mind, one can achieve strength. But Col. Wood has always been strong, and so it is unnecessary for him to strike these literary poses. He has faced the horror of life, and has not run away from it. He has not been made mean or neutral. He is the hopeful youth of the world, and it is our young Hemingways and Callaghans who are the dreary, neutral, selfish cowardly old men.

I can't understand how this is true, but it is.

He has led one of the most interesting lives in America. He was appointed to West Point at the personal recommendation of General Grant. He rose to the rank of Colonel, and fought in the Indian wars. He served in the campaign against Chief Joseph, and when that Chief was defeated, Col. Wood was instrumental in negotiating the treaty of surrender.

The United State government broke that treaty, and cruelly betrayed the Indians. Col. Wood had become a close friend and admirer of Chief Joseph, and as protest against the betrayal, he gave up his army career and resigned his command. His letter of resignation will be printed in American history books of the future; it is the first clear voice to denounce the first crimes of American imperialism.

At the age of forty, Col. Wood took up a new career; he studied law. He became a wealthy man at this, one of the best-known corporation lawyers on the Pacific Coast.

Around the age of fifty, another renewal of life. This remark-

able man was moved by the same impulse that had made him leave the army. He saw that law and business were but another branch of American injustice, and in protest he became an anarchist and poet.

He opposed the World War, openly and untiringly, he defended anarchists, I. W. W. and conscientious objectors in the courts, he wrote his masterpiece, "The Poet in the Desert," an epic synthesis of American life that I am confident will live with Walt Whitman.

Today, at the age of 75, Mr. Wood goes on producing and agitating. He helps in the defense of Soviet Russia against the capitalist world, he was active in the Sacco-Vanzetti case, he gives his time and feeling to every radical cause. He has the vitality, freshness and versatility of a man of the Renaissance. He is a noted expert on gems. He is an Elizabethan scholar. He is curiously enough, a gourmet, and at least three of the best restaurants in San Francisco have courses named in his honor. He is an authority on law. He is a crack shot, cavalryman and military expert. He is a frontiersman, the last of the old scouts. He is an amateur painter, and at one time thought of painting as a career. He was the friend of the first generation of American painters, and has helped in the development of many of the promising younger painters and sculptors on the Pacific Coast.

I was a guest at his 72nd birthday party, a few years ago. Surrounded by his many friends, children, grandchildren and admirers, he sat at the head of a long table, the last of the old American breed. With his shaggy white hair and beard, his blue, calm eyes and radiant face, and buffalo dignity of manner and speech, he reminded one of his favorite character—God.

He was different from God, however, in that he was witty and human; not a thunderer, but a fascinating raconteur.

I told him he ought write his autobiography. I said it would be as significant as that of Henry Adams, more so, perhaps, for it would have a coherent meaning, it would span the history of America. This man is a living history of our country. He has lived through the raw, bloody birth of the nation, its Indian and pioneer days. He was present at the rise of its great cities; he watched step by step the growth of its industrial empire. He saw American capitalism come in; he has seen it expand and seize the world. He saw the rise of the class-conscious proletariat in America.

Through all these steps he was not a passive, weary observer, like Henry Adams, but an active rebel, a fighter and lover and man of action. He saw this world emerge with his own eyes, in the flesh, not in books.

"Write it," I urged, "it is almost your duty."

He smiled. "No," he said, "only those who retire from life write their autobiographies. I haven't the time; I've too much still to do."

It is true. This man of 75 is calmly planning an epic poem that may take five years to complete. He has other preoccupations. He goes about his large plans without hurry, without pettiness. He is serene, not with some fake optimism that shuts him in cottonwool from the pangs of life, but with a deep organic confidence in the universe that is a secret to "modern" Americans. His revolution is not based on nerves; it is as broad, as sure, as inevitable as the movements of Sirius. He has seen much. Yet every day he gives himself with new, youthful ardor to the revolutionary battle.

I marvel at such a man. America is a lonely land for anyone with a sense of social justice. Any taint of social idealism is regarded as an abnormality by the great mass of crazy climbers in America. At times this seems like the most barren and hopeless prisonhouse country in the world. But when I meet old Americans like Bishop William Montgomery Brown, or Luther Burbank, or Colonel Wood, I remember that Hollywood and Park Row have not said the last word on this country.

It nourished these great sturdy evergreens, and the soil is still there for others.

But I marvel at publishers, too. Mr. Wood has never lifted a finger for literary recognition. He has written because he wanted to, and because he was a radical. His "Poet in the Desert" has been translated into German, French, Russian, Japanese and

Chinese. It is almost unknown in this country, save in a few anthologies.

His *Heavenly Discourse* was published only a year ago. I had taken it to four publishers in manuscript form, and all shook their heads sagely, and said "short stories would never sell." Mr. Wood published the book at his own expense, finally.

It has already sold over 30,000 copies. It is by way of being a popular success. It deserves to be; it is one of the few classics of our day. For it has in it a streak of the immortal with and wisdom of the human race.

## SANITY ON SEX

*To the Pure*, by Morris Ernst and William Seagle. Viking. \$3.

Morris Ernst and William Seagle are the authors of an extremely interesting study of obscenity and sex censorship. It is the only recent work on the subject that ventures beneath surface hysteria to analyze the problem with some semblance of scientific precision.

Censorship, according to the writers, went through the following three forms: the religious, the political, and finally the sexual, which is the modern culmination. "The course of evolution may be stated to be from heresy to treason to obscenity. The purpose of authority remains always the same, but the index of censorship changes. Each age produces those formulae of suppression which coincide with its dominant interest. It hits upon the test of virtue and the good life which, when the individual meets it in the conditions of the time in which he happens to live, constitutes the assurance of his regularity." Any form of censorship is thus the product of the ruling class wish to force submission on the part of the other social classes. The Church was the first outstanding censor, but its interest was not in sex censorship; it concentrated merely on obedience to the pope. Similarly, when the modern state supplanted the Church as the chief temporal power, it refrained usually from sex control, devoting itself to political regularity.

Sex censorship comes with the appearance of a powerful bourgeoisie, which grew with international commerce and industry, and which adhered mainly to Protestantism. Sex censorship is an expression of little more than the commercial need for dependability and stability of conduct. In its later forms it is associated with the desire to uphold before the working classes the ideals of sobriety, modesty, and all the other virtues so necessary for industrial life. In short, its foundation is utilitarian and material.


Of course, the original motive is at present largely ignored, and puritanism is looked upon as a more or less abstract concept of the good life. The motives of the active censor are of interest to the psychoanalyst, and the unconscious hypocrisy of the public is worth an essay on social approval and conformity. The authors of *To the Pure*, however, restrict their observations to the legal game. After describing the origins and development of censorship and ideas of the "obscene," they begin a systematic attack on the whole business. By reducing its premises to absurdities, by proving that there is no definition of the "obscene," by pointing to contradictions in law, by indicating variations in morals according to variations in material conditions, they destroy the entire argument in favor of sex censorship. This book leaves no nourishment for the Straton and Sumners. As an intelligent survey of the field, and as a treatment of the various courses taken by advocates of censorship, it deserves the attention of all those interested in the very vital question of free literary expression.

B. S.

*My First Two Thousand Years*, by Paul Eldridge and George Sylvester Viereck. Macaulay. \$2.50.

The story of the Wandering Jew has been the subject of controversies for ages. It has undergone countless revisions and variations, but in the main it has somehow retained the same features. Now come two self-extolled historians of a new type of Wandering Jew. Eldridge and Viereck have produced a Wanderer who meets all the requirements of the jazz age. His life, according to the two authors, consisted entirely of one sexual escapade after another. As even the sex experiences they attribute to him are stale and hackneyed, this book is unusually shallow. If you can be interested by snappy stories decorated by literary style, you will find *My First Two Thousand Years* rather entrancing. If you demand something more in a book, you had better ignore this one.

IRVING T. MARSH.



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# JOSIAH FLYNT

By WILLIAM EDGE

Jack London dedicated his book, *The Road*, to Josiah Flynt, "blowed-in-the-glass." That phrase characterized Flynt better than a page of description.

In a glossary of tramp's jargon which Josiah Flynt himself appended to one of his books, the expression "blowed-in-the-glass" is thus defined: "a trustworthy, 'pal,' a professional." This definition is, I think, characteristic of the ineptness with which Flynt used the English language. For when Jack London used the phrase, I am sure that he had in mind something more colorful than a trustworthy pal or a professional.

Josiah Flynt, although born into a respectable, middle-class family, developed an early taste for stealing horses and buggies. For his thefts he was sent to a reform school from which he made a bold escape; and, while still young, he began a series of hobo wanderings which lasted until his death. Wanderings in England, Germany, Russia, and America; wanderings in answer to the call of *Die Ferne*; wanderings which were undertaken for the purpose of making social studies; wanderings which took him entirely out of the world of hobos and ended in the underworld of desperate criminals. He was known to hobos all over America by his nom-de-road, Chicago Cigarette; and he, in return, knew nearly all the famous American tramps of his day. He had such a wide acquaintance with pickpockets that he could have found several companions at any county fair or circus. He knew the criminal's cant so well that the reader of his books simply cannot understand him when he reproduces verbatim a conversation with a thief. He was saturated, he was steeped, in the lore, the language, the customs, and the ethics of the Pariah.

Surely it was this virtuosity as a wanderer which impelled Jack London to write: "To Josiah Flynt, blowed-in-the-glass." We have writers on hobo life and proletarian life and criminal life today; Nels Anderson, Jim Tully, Harry Kemp, and a dozen lesser lights. But name the man who can match Josiah Flynt. As a wanderer he was superb. He knew Old Boston Mary, and he knew the Lake Shore Push; he knew the Russian Goriouns, and he knew the German Chausseegrabentapizirer. When he went to a new country he learned, not the speech of the upper levels of society, but the jargon of the submerged tenth.

When he left the fashionable avenues, in which he could feel at home, for the side streets, in which he felt very much at home, he would change his bearing, his vocabulary, the timbre of his voice, and the lines of his mouth so completely that he passed unsuspected. No stiff or dip would have recognized in him the University of Berlin student. When he tried to mooch a drink in a crib, nobody would have suspected that his aunt was Frances E. Willard.

As an interpreter of his wanderings he was, however, not adequate. He wrote several books on trampdom, including an autobiography, all of which are crammed with interesting, thrilling detail. It is a kaleidoscopic record. When he sets out to put order in this record, however, he exhibits inconsistencies, harshness, softness, and a complete ignorance of the economic forces which drag men into crime and vagrancy. He uses the psychological approach, never the economic.

In this chapter he maintains that the crook has a high sense of honor; in another he proves elaborately that honor among thieves is but the grossest kind of self-interest. He condemns reformatories and jails in no uncertain terms; yet he would have the law deal even more harshly than it does with vagrants and delinquent youths. Truly enough, when Flynt sics the cop on an erring person, he has in mind a well trained, super-cop—but, after all, a cop. Often he speaks in most sympathetic terms of his fellow-migrants. At other times he refers to men who beg for bread as "the Powers that Prey." Unemployment as a breeder of crime and vagrancy is, apparently, something he never heard of. In short, although no recent American from an upper-income level has been so completely at home among outcasts as Josiah Flynt, few men who have rubbed shoulders with the vagrant have been so ignorant as he has, of the social structure which creates vagrancy. The science, or philosophy, of economics was a sealed book to him.

## II

Josiah Flynt, whose real name was Willard, was born in 1869. He came of good family; his father was editor-in-chief of a Chicago daily newspaper. His aunt was one of the most famous women of

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her day. He was wiry and undersized, shy and morbidly sensitive. A photograph taken of him in 1894 reveals very little about his character; the picture startles you, for he looks dull-witted.

It is a little hard to discover what first sent young Josiah on the road. He himself attributes it to an inborn wanderlust, to the call of what he terms "Die Ferne." In the nineties the science of psychology might have admitted the existence in one's nervous system of something as mystical as "Die Ferne." In 1928, however, we are more skeptical.

Perhaps an overworked, unbending, religious father would account for Josiah's having taken a dislike to his home. Perhaps the early death of the father placed the responsibility of character-molding into the hands of an irresolute—even though tender—mother. Finally, a torturing self-consciousness had grown up in the child somehow—his short stature probably contributed to this—so that he sought relief from the problems he had to face by running away from them.

There was something magnetic about him for his friends have written of him with glowing admiration. And what friends he had! Andrew D. White wrote the preface to one of his books; Arthur Symons the introduction to another. Concerning their first meeting, Symons has written:

"I saw a little, thin, white, shriveled creature with determined eyes and tight lips, taciturn and self-composed, quietly restless; he was eyeing me critically, as I thought. . . . I found myself almost instantly accepting him as one of the people who were to mean something to me. There are those people in life, and the others; the others do not matter."

Another friend said:

"What first struck me was his prodigality in talk. He scattered treasures of anecdote and observation as Aladdin of the wonderful lamp orders his slave to scatter gold pieces." (Alfred Hodder).

In his autobiography—final test of a man's integrity—he is sincere and honest—tremendously honest for one brought up in the literary taboos of the nineties. He tells about himself fearlessly, describing, however, the external facts better than his motives. There are two omissions. One omission will be considered deplorable by boys and girls who have just recently received their last spanking: he tells us no luscious stories of his sex-life. The other omission is his failure to record the habit which, perhaps indirectly, caused his death at the age of thirty-eight. He drank heavily.

The disappointing thing about Josiah Flynt's restless life is its sterility. A man admirably equipped to record the facts in the lives of outcasts goes and dwells among them. During his lifetime he writes copiously in the magazines and journals of his day. His publications, with other manuscripts, are collected into several volumes, one of which is an autobiography. In his late thirties he suddenly dies. His books are to be found in Andrew Carnegie's libraries. You can always get them, unfortunately; your slip is never returned with "out" written across it. His books are already out of date, for the ways of the hobo have changed in the last thirty years.

That is all. His peculiar genius left no trace.

And yet—read his books. Read his autobiography. If you do not add a social prophet to your list of acquaintances, you will at least add a real guy—blowed-in-the-glass.

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# WORKERS' LETTERS

## From a College Student

Dear New Masses:

There have been forty copies of you I think. It is over two years ago then, that a boy who did not know there was a world of laborers, who did not know there was any world at all, outside of the little circle of his life, found you in his bedroom. He had heard, however, of modern art and the cubistic cover in red, white and black provoked his curiosity. His father told him it was a lot of bolshevick nonsense that would not interest him; but he was wrong, oh terribly wrong, because the boy read every New Masses from cover to cover, from that time on, and packed them all away, under the table by his bed.

He was fifteen when the first New Masses came to him, and now he is eighteen, and he feels so close to the New Masses and wonders if New Masses will accept him as a comrade.

What is life? He is eighteen and he wants to know. He lives in a house with a beautiful garden in a fashionable country district that is strictly residential and for almost a year he knew not a single young soul for miles about. He left the city of hills by the sea because the fog and the wind (that he loved so dearly) threatened tuberculosis . . . left for a land where he cannot find himself and sees no future.

There are so many kinds of suffering. He never knew great physical pain. He never knew poverty. But he knew the meaning of the word "Outcast." God had created him a little bit differently than the rest, and in school the boys called him names and set him apart from them and he was lonely often, so terribly lonely . . . and then one day he saw a face . . . and then he was in love . . . the world scorned his love, hated him for it . . . and the face he loved, did not love him. The strangest things happened. He saw a face in the evening newspaper. The face was a poet's face. He wrote a letter to the face in the paper and they became very great friends. The poet was twice his years. One day he left for Italy . . . never to return . . . but left the boy with things that would remain with him thru all of life . . . friendship . . . love . . . and understanding . . . some day the boy is going to publish a novel about it all . . . because there must be many others like him . . . and he wants it to be a message to them.

When he went to college they were indifferent to him. He was just out of things: He commuted on a train and he was not happy. He recalled the love that was in him . . . he saw the faces to whom he desired to give his love . . . saw that they could not accept it . . . and wondered why he was at all. Then he became ill and was sent away. All the while he read New Masses and he began to think of the millions who worked all day in offices and factories . . . of the many who could find no work at all . . . of those who were perhaps much more ill than himself and who must work . . . and he wondered how damn important he was after all . . . then he wanted to forget himself altogether . . . and help the masses . . . give them his writing . . . but could he ever get it to them . . . would they want it if they could get it. He had always wanted to write. He has written many things. Now his time is his own and he is writing every day. But he wants to be active . . . he wants to meet active people . . . people who are trying to make the world better for the working class.

The year is closing. Those most gorgeous days are coming, when the trees by the lane will be afire with gold and red and yellow leaves, and he will walk each day with his dog to a certain point as he did last year at this time, and then return . . . the clouds will roll lazily across the heavens and the rains will come, the first, sweet-smelling

rains . . . but it will all mean so little when life is such an empty useless thing. His father tells him how much he costs him, with gymnasium bills and music lessons . . . his father and mother don't believe in him. They don't think he will ever amount to anything, and at the beginning of the new year they will want him to return to college . . . and if college should mean the same unfriendliness it meant two years ago . . .

Sometimes the boy thinks he is mad. He really is useless. Can't cook or do anything with his hands, but he wants to learn. What would happen to him, if he wandered away from the shelter of his comfortable home . . . just went away into the world to look for life and love . . . but he is afraid of failure . . . there must be things for him to do somewhere in the world . . . but he does not know where to find them . . . oh to be one with people, to feel them, know them, love them. There is a gate somewhere but he is a coward, and will not open it.

The NEW MASSES has helped to show him the gate . . . perhaps some day soon he will walk out and find life and be worthy of himself and life.

H. H. C.

Son Joaquin, Calif.

## From a Taxi Driver

This is the fourth summer that finds me grinding gears behind the wheel of a taxicab. Steaming heat drifts up into my face in filmy waves. The nauseous odor of burnt gasoline starts my head aching. Sweat rolls into my eyes and I hold the wheel with one hand as I drive and keep mopping my face with the other hand. My legs have no spring. They fall against the stiff clutch and brake—two heavy, lifeless logs. The tendons under the thighs swell through the flesh like tortured live-wires with each shift of gears.

I move fast. Headed for the Penn Railway. My fares look "regular" and they must make a train. My eyes strain on openings left by careful drivers. I cow-boy in and out, chiseling adroitly into small spaces. The meter clicks—the wheels whirr and the tires slapping against the oozy tar of the road make a rhythm which sounds like tip-tip-tip-tip—and I speculate what will it be—my tip—two-bits, maybe four—both of them look quite snappy, talking coolly on that back seat!

With each flashing traffic light I jockey ahead creeping up bit by bit. The excitement of making time, the thrill of dexterous maneuvering through the traffic gets me. I forget the dull ache in my head and the leaden weariness in my thighs.

The lights flash green, my heel comes down heavy on the gas, the cab is ahead and bing!—a motorcycle shoots from a side street cutting me into the curb. A voice like a knife-stab in my heart sneers "Give us your hack book and badge." My fares jump out—"Into another cab—must make train—sorry, buddy." I sit burning up inside, watching the hard faced thug in blue uniform writing my license numbers on a white printed slip. It's not my first gift from the police. We cab drivers get a few each year regularly. I know it means three days mush and thin milk, vermin and sweeping corridors in the Tombs. \$25.00 is a week's wages. No, not a week, a nightmare! 12 hours for 6 nights—out of the question the fine. I plead—wife and kids—sick, just out of the hospital—lose my job if I must serve the three days—poverty—can't pay fine—please give us a chance. I roll a five dollar bill around a cigar and ask him to have a smoke. He finishes writing, looks up, his eyes dirty with hate and leers "Tell it to the judge." I get my tip—a speed ticket!

ABE MOSCOW.

New York.



## For Mooney and Billings

The International Labor Defense, will in the near future be called upon to defend nearly 1500 workers in the capitalist courts. The cases now being defended by the I. L. D. include nearly 700 textile workers of New Bedford, who face prison sentences as high as three years, the cases involving the leaders of the National Miners Union, Pat Toohey, Anthony Minerich and many others, who are either now in jail or out on bail, the case of John Porter who is being tortured in prison at Fort Leavenworth because he opposed imperialist war and because he was an active striker in New Bedford, the Cheswick case, where a score of workers were arrested for participating in a Sacco-Vanzetti demonstration the Topalsanyi and other cases of attempted deportation and many others. In addition the International Labor Defense is conducting a campaign for the release of Tom Mooney and Warren K. Billings from San Quentin and Folsom prisons and for the release of the Centralia loggers.

In order to successfully carry on these cases the I. L. D. has been conducting a Christmas campaign for funds. The workers are already sending a stream of dimes and dollars into the National Office, but the expenses are very heavy in defending these 1500 workers.

The International Labor Defense is a non-partisan workers' organization. In all of its activities the I. L. D. not only shields the workers from capitalist justice, but in its campaigns it points out that in America workers are continuously persecuted by the capitalist government, the courts and the police and that the workers must organize in the I. L. D. and fight militantly against this capitalist class justice as dealt out by the capitalist courts. All workers and sympathizers are urged to immediately send funds to the National Office of the International Labor Defense, 80 East 11th Street, Room 402, New York, for the conducting of these and similar cases.

A. WAGENKNECHT,  
Sec'y, International Labor Defense

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